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MODERN WARFARE

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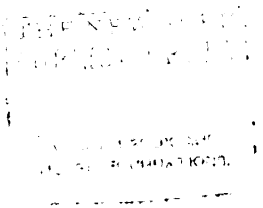

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1914
March 30. 23

Modern Warfare

or

How Our Soldiers Fight

By

"UBIQUE"
(Guggisberg, Frederick Gordon)

With Maps, Diagrams, and Illustrations

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
London, Edinburgh, and New York
1903

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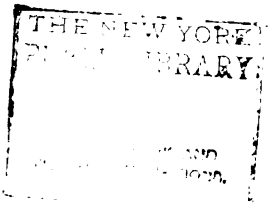

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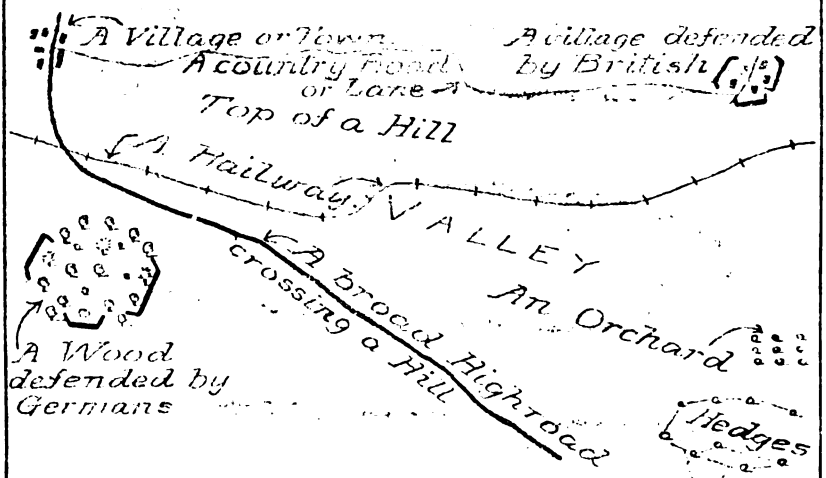
SCALES

0 ¼ ½ ¾ 1 2

The line above represents TWO MILES
and
the line below represents 4,000 YARDS

0 500 1000 2000 3000 4000

FEATURES OF THE COUNTRY



TROOPS

British in Red , Germans in Blue .

INFANTRY halted ; marching along a road ; in trenches ; advancing to attack with scouts in front,

CAVALRY . MOUNTED INFANTRY . ditto dismounted . ditto dismounted . Cavalry and mounted infantry scouts

ARTILLERY. A battery of 6 guns . A howitzer battery H H . Single guns

LINES of ADVANCE

LINES of RETREAT

POSITIONS of Generals

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MODERN WARFARE.

Part I.

CHAPTER I.

INFANTRY.

A Description of the way in which the British Foot Soldier is armed, clothed, and organized into Companies and Battalions.

YOU probably know Private Tommy Atkins, the foot soldier of His Majesty's army, pretty well by sight when he is at home in time of peace. Then, he is usually a smart, clean, fresh-looking young redcoat, who swaggers about his garrison town when "off duty" as if the whole place belongs to him, and grumbles atrociously if his food is not cooked exactly to his liking. In time of war he abandons his finery, clothes himself in a greeny-brown uniform which soon assumes a variety of hues, drops his swaggering gait as being unnecessarily fatiguing, becomes alarmingly unconcerned as to what he eats and drinks, grows a stubbly beard, and in a short time develops into an exceedingly ugly-looking customer to tackle.

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The regiment to which he belongs also changes in appearance; but let us take a glimpse at one under both conditions.

We will imagine that it is towards the end of Queen Victoria's reign, and that we have come to Aldershot to see a big review held in honour of Her Majesty's birthday. It is on occasions such as these that you see a British infantry regiment looking its smartest, so we go early to the plain where the review is to take place in order to see the troops arrive.

Battalion after battalion of infantry comes marching past us to its appointed place in the line, and we find it a difficult matter to put a name to many of them, so alike are the scarlet and blue uniforms and smart spiked helmets. But presently the skirl of bagpipes falls on our ears, and a Highland regiment comes swinging down the road, looking very picturesque with its waving feather bonnets, short scarlet coats with yellow facings, white belts and gaiters, plaid stockings, and bare knees.

Who are they? Look at their kilts—dark green and black with a vivid yellow stripe, over them hanging white horsehair sporrans with two little black tails. And the "2" on the shoulder-straps tells the rest of the tale: they are the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, the old 92nd.

The old 92nd! The regiment raised in 1794 by the Marquis of Huntly, afterwards the last Duke of Gordon, whose beautiful young mother placed the "King's shilling" between her lips as the price of a kiss—and enlistment—

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for unwilling recruits. Honour be to Scotland that few refused to accept it! The regiment which has served in every quarter of the globe with distinction and glory—what a host of gallant deeds its name recalls to memory!

The most stirring, perhaps, of the Gordons' feats was performed in the afternoon of Waterloo. The Scots Greys were moving up to charge the French, and the 92nd was ordered to open out to allow them to pass through its ranks. It was too much for the Highlanders to bear; they could not stay behind while their countrymen were going forward. Scottish private shouted to Scottish dragoon, Scottish dragoon cried back to Scottish private. The shouts and cries rose to a wild yell of "Scotland for ever!" and the pipes skirled madly, stirring the common blood of both regiments to fever heat. The Highlanders seized the Greys' stirrups, and the whole mass charged forward, the horsemen waving their swords, the footmen dragged along breathless, flourishing musket and bayonet, and making gigantic strides over the bodies of fallen men and horses. United Scotland fell pell-mell on the French column and utterly routed it!

We doff our caps as the colours pass us, as a tribute of respect to the tattered flags which have waved over a hundred actions, and have witnessed the deeds of thousands of brave men who have served, fought, and died in the gallant Gordons. No more fights will these flags see, for nowadays a regiment leaves its colours at home when it goes to the front.

The regiment goes by. Behind it come the Royal

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Dublin Fusiliers—the old 102nd Foot, the heroes of many a hard-fought day. The band is playing a merry Irish march, and the battalion forms a strong contrast to the Highlanders; for the great black bearskins, scarlet tunics, and blue trousers give it a heavier and more solid appearance.

Some years later we find ourselves in a long street of straggling tin-roofed houses in a quaint little town surrounded by high hills. The sides of the street are lined with soldiers—thin, pale men, some dressed in dirty khaki, others in worn and tattered greatcoats. Up the middle of the roadway a procession of great, strapping, bronzed and bearded men swings along with firm and confident step. Their clothes are dirty, torn, and patched; there is not a vestige of colour about them except khaki. But for all their want of finery, for all their scrubby cheeks and tattered clothing, they are the finest fighting men in the world; they are the men who have relieved this little town of Ladysmith after months of desperate struggling against an enemy posted in a well-nigh impregnable position.

As the head of each battalion arrives opposite them, the men lining the road—the garrison of Ladysmith—receive it with a cheer, and the victorious relievers cheer back again and pass on. The gallant defenders are so weak after the privations, vigilance, and hard work of the siege, that as soon as one battalion passes many sit down on the ground, or half-stand, half-kneel, struggling to their feet again to cheer the next regiment.

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We notice that the battalion which heads the procession barely numbers four hundred men, and is led by only five officers. They are none other than our old friends the "Dublins," whom we last saw at Aldershot in the Queen's Birthday review. But where are the rest of their thousand men and thirty officers? Ah! you may well ask, for *they* are the price the regiment has paid for its present proud position at the head of the relieving army. This post of honour has been awarded the "Dublins" for their gallant conduct in the constant fighting of the last ten days, when the brave Fusiliers won a glory which will never die.

And those gaunt men on the other side of the road, wearing what appear to be khaki petticoats, and cheering the Irishmen as they pass, are also old friends of ours, the Gordons, who have fought since the first day of the war with the valour and contempt of death which have distinguished their regiment for over a century.

Such is the difference in the appearance of infantry in peace and in war. The beardless striplings who fill the ranks at home develop, after a few months' campaigning, into fine, hardy fighting men. The battalions, over one thousand strong, are reduced by casualties to a much smaller number. Every effort is made to keep them up to full strength by sending drafts from home; but at the best of times a battalion on active service has rarely more than eight hundred men in its ranks—that is, eight companies of one hundred men each.

At one time a battalion was considered to be the right

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number of men for one officer to lead and control in battle. That was in the days when infantry fought in solid masses, the men in each line shoulder to shoulder; consequently a battalion did not extend over very much ground.

A solid mass of men, however, makes a very fine target for an enemy, so that modern rifles and field-guns, which can be fired far quicker and at a much greater distance than the old ones, would mow down the ranks as a reaping machine cuts corn. To avoid this, men who are advancing to the attack are scattered several yards apart, and a battalion consequently becomes so extended that one man cannot possibly control all its movements. So it is generally reckoned nowadays that a company of one hundred men is the greatest force which one officer—its captain—can handle in action.

A battalion is commanded by a lieutenant-colonel, but, in a soldier's eyes, *the* officer in a regiment is the captain of his company. In peace the latter pays him, punishes him for small offences—the serious ones are dealt with by the colonel—and looks after his food, uniform, and amusements. In war he leads him into action. If the captain is really a good officer, and just in his dealings, he is loved by his men, and there are countless cases in history where the latter have sacrificed their lives to save his in time of battle.

There are many duties in war, the performance of which do not require such a large body of men as a company. So the captain divides his command into two half-

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companies (*see Fig. 1*), and places a subaltern in charge of each. Each of these half-companies is further divided into two sections, under the charge of sergeants. Sometimes a "squad" of ten or twelve men, or a "group" of four or five men, is sent away to do some special duty. The former is led by a corporal, and the latter looks to one of its number as leader.

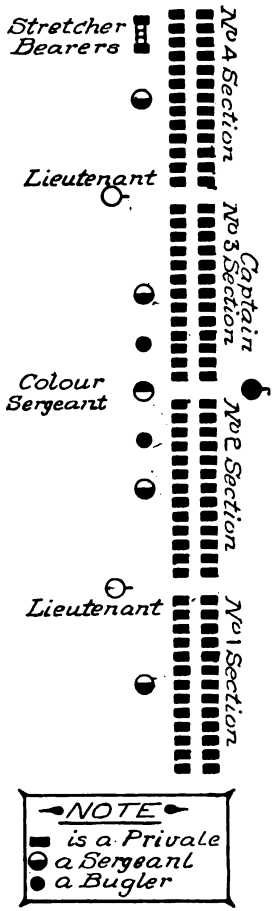

FIG. 1.—A COMPANY OF INFANTRY.

This diagram shows how a company of infantry, which is commanded by a captain, is divided into four sections. Its total strength is 116, but owing to casualties, it seldom goes into action more than 100 strong.

In any of these cases something may happen which will give the commander of the party a chance of showing his worth as a leader, so that sergeants, corporals, and privates all have opportunities of earning promotion.

How the soldiers who fought in the bloody battles of the Peninsular War would stare if they could see the rifle with which their regimental descendants are armed! We read how, a little over ninety years ago, the 43rd Foot and four companies of the Rifles—1,200 men in all—advanced across a quarter of a mile of open

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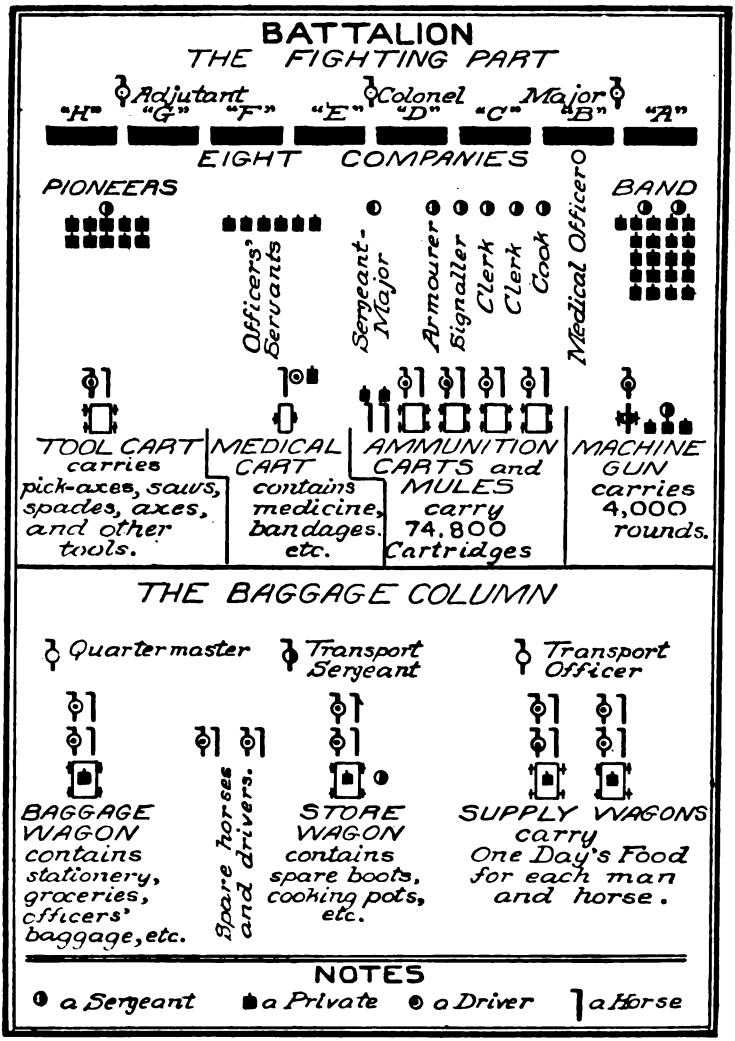

FIG. 2.—A BATTALION OF INFANTRY.

This diagram shows every one of the 1,010 officers and men in an infantry battalion, which is usually spoken of as a regiment. Each of the eight companies is known by a

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ground, and charged 12,000 Frenchmen occupying a strong position on a hill at Sabugal! Three times were the gallant assailants repulsed, but on their fourth attempt the enemy were completely routed, and fled in disorder.

Contrast this with the battle of Modder River. The British line, advancing, as at Sabugal, over open ground, was received with such a sudden hail of bullets that the troops in the centre could not get within a mile of the enemy; nor, for that matter, could they retreat. They lay

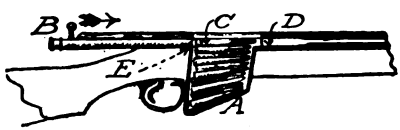

FIG. 3.—THE LEE-ENFIELD RIFLE.

A spring (A) at the bottom of the magazine pushes the cartridges up towards the top. By pushing forward the bolt (B) in the direction of the arrow, you shove the top cartridge (C) into the chamber (D). After you have fired, you pull back the bolt, and this pulls out the empty cartridge case. A small metal leaf can be pushed across the top of the magazine at E, so that you can load and fire the rifle without using the cartridges in the magazine. This leaf is called the "cut-off."

there for eight hours in a burning sun, their throats parched with thirst and choked with the dust which rose from the continual dropping of the enemy's bullets on the dry sandy soil around them.

At the battle of Sabugal the fair range of small arms was scarcely two hundred yards, loading was a matter of nearly a minute, and the ammunition was so heavy that a soldier could carry very few rounds.

letter, and is composed as shown in *Fig. 1*, except that a lieutenant of one of the companies is doing duty as "transport officer." The pioneers carry axes and shovels, and know how to make small bridges and remove obstacles in the way of the troops. When the battalion goes into action, the bandsmen and officers' servants are usually divided among the companies.

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Nowadays, with the Lee-Enfield rifle, a dozen aimed shots can be fired in a minute; and if you like to open the magazine, you can discharge the ten cartridges in it in less than thirty seconds! You can adjust the sights to fire at any distance up to a mile and a half. The cartridge—bullet and powder in one—is so light that one hundred and fifty can be carried in a fight without any great discomfort (*Fig. 3*).

If you are a good shot, and have something to rest your rifle on, you may be able to hit single men at a distance of over half a mile. If the enemy appear in large compact bodies, you should be able to drop bullets into them at a range of over one and a half miles; but, of course, not all these bullets will find a billet. The state of the atmosphere has a good deal to do with the accuracy of long-range fire like this. In South Africa, for example, it is singularly clear, and men can be distinguished at a much greater distance than is usually the case in European countries.

Smokeless powder is used in rifle ammunition nowadays, with the result that it is almost impossible to tell where the enemy's riflemen are, if they take care to shelter themselves behind bushes, rocks, and hedges. This difficulty was not experienced in the last war between European nations of any importance—namely, Russia and Turkey in 1877—for smokeless powder was not used until twelve years ago. Then, it was an easy matter to locate your enemy by the puffs of smoke from his rifle. Now, you may fight for a whole day, with the bullets pattering

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round you, without seeing any one to fire at in return, as was the case in many a battle in South Africa

Every man carries 100 cartridges in his pouches, while another 77 are carried for him in the regimental ammunition carts. (*See Fig. 2.*) When a fight is imminent, 50 of these are issued to him, so that he actually goes into action with 150 rounds on his person. Besides these, another 132 rounds are carried for him in the ammunition columns which accompany an army. Later, we shall see how these reach him during a fight.*

Each man carries a short bayonet, the blade of which is double edged, and about twelve inches long. When the moment comes for the final charge on the enemy, this bayonet is fixed on to the end of the rifle barrel.

There are many people who, when talking about modern warfare, say that the day of the bayonet has passed—that the terrific fire of magazine rifles and Maxim guns will prevent any troops approaching close enough to each other to come to actual hand-to-hand fighting with the bayonet. You must not entirely believe this statement, although there is a certain amount of truth in it. If the enemy is determined to stick to a position which he is defending, and if the ground in front of it is so open as to give no cover at all to the attacking troops, the latter will no doubt lose many men if they charge with the bayonet by daylight, and they will probably be unsuccessful. But if the final rush is made in the dark, the bayonet must be used, as the men cannot see to fire.

* See page 326.

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Our British soldiers have always been famous for the deadly way in which they use their bayonets. There were countless cases in the last great war when, even if they did not succeed in getting to close quarters with the enemy, the fear of their doing so made the Boers bolt like rabbits when the rough "Khakis"—as they called them—got within charging distance of them.

Officers used to be armed with a sword and revolver; but in order to prevent them from being easily distinguished by the enemy and shot, they now carry a rifle instead of a sword.

The Maxim machine gun which belongs to every battalion is worked by a sergeant and three men. It is sighted up to nearly one and a half miles. To fire it, you insert the end of a long belt holding 250 cartridges into the breech. When you press a button, this belt runs through the breech, and the cartridges are fired one after another. The whole number can be discharged in less than half a minute, if necessary.

Besides their rifles and bayonets, one-third of the men in a battalion carry a light pickaxe, and two-thirds a light shovel, attached to their belts. These are for making shelter trenches and rifle pits to protect the men against the enemy's bullets. It is astonishing how quickly and well you can shield yourself by digging a hole only about nine inches deep, and just broad and long enough to lie in, end-on to the enemy, throwing the earth up in a little mound in front. It will only take you about ten minutes. If the ground is very rocky and hard to dig

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in, a few stones piled up in front will give you capital shelter.

The "baggage column" of a battalion consists of four wagons (*Fig. 2*). The subaltern in charge is called the

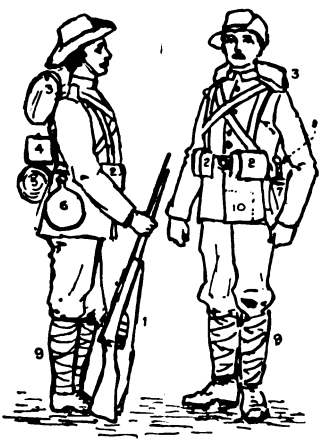

FIG. 4.—THE SOLDIER'S KIT ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

The coat and trousers are of green-brown cloth, commonly spoken of as drab colour, which has replaced the khaki worn in the last war. The puttees are of cloth of the same colour, and are wound round the calf, beginning at the ankle and finishing up below the knee, where they are secured with pieces of tape. The belts are of brown leather, and the hat of brown felt. In the above figure, 1 is the Lee-Enfield magazine rifle; 2, 2, the cartridge pouches, carrying fifty cartridges each; 3 is the knapsack, holding a shirt, pair of socks, boots, cap, cape, towel, piece of soap, clothes brush, oil flask, comb, knife, fork, spoon, and emergency ration; 4 is a light mess-tin, which is used for cooking food; 5 is a greatcoat rolled up; 6 is a light, flat, covered water-bottle; 7 is a canvas haversack, the strap of which passes over the right shoulder; 8 is a short bayonet; 9, 9, are the puttees already described; 10 are lint and bandages sewn inside the lappet of the coat.

"transport officer." He follows several miles in rear of the battalion, so that his wagons will be safely out of the way when fighting is going on; but he must try to catch up with it when the camping-place for the night is reached, as he has to issue the day's food to

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the men. Later on, we shall see how he gets more food for the next day.

Infantry Marches.

If you are in pretty good condition, you will probably think nothing of tramping along at the rate of nearly four miles an hour when out for a good country walk. But suppose we load you with the sixty-one pounds which a foot soldier has to carry (*see Fig. 4*), and place you in a long column of several hundred men marching along a road. If you step out too freely, you will tread on the heels of the man in front; while the man behind will tread on yours, if you lag for a moment to "get your wind," or because you have a "stitch," or are tired. Your rifle has a nasty habit of seeming to grow heavier every mile; and you have to be careful how you carry it, or you will annoy the man behind by poking the end in his eyes. Then there is rain to make the roads muddy and heavy, or heat, or dust on a dry day, when you will be half-choked by clouds stirred up by hundreds of tramping feet.

In fact, there are a dozen little things which prevent you from walking as fast as if you were by yourself. In addition to this, there are always some men in a large force who are not strong, or who are footsore. These act as a drag on the remainder, for they cannot be left behind. The larger the force, the slower its rate of marching.

Taking it all round, a small body of infantry—say a

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battalion—can go at the rate of about three and three-quarter miles an hour along a road, if it only has to march about six miles. But it cannot keep this pace up for a longer distance, as frequent halts have to be made in order to let the men in rear, who have gradually fallen behind, catch up with their comrades in front. A battalion only averages two and three-quarter miles an hour for a fourteen-mile march.

Larger forces do less. An infantry division (eight battalions), for instance, barely covers two and a half miles an hour for short distances, while a fourteen-mile march will take it nearly seven hours.

An ordinary day's march is anything up to fifteen miles, starting at sunrise or a little after, and getting to the camping-place about midday. But this depends a good deal on the climate. If it is very hot, half the march is made in the early morning, and the remainder in the cool of the evening. You cannot, however, do distances of fifteen miles day after day for a long period. Twenty-four hours' rest must be taken occasionally, or the men will arrive on the battlefield footsore and weary.

You have probably often heard the expression "forced march" used. It means any distance over twenty miles in one day. The French are famous for their "forced marches," but our British soldiers have made even more wonderful ones than they have.

For instance, the Light Division in the Peninsula in 1813 crossed forty miles of mountainous country in nineteen consecutive hours. The Rifle Brigade, then the 95th,

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also made a great march in the Peninsula, covering nearly fifty miles in twenty-five hours to reach Talavera in time for the battle.

In more recent times, the march of the British brigade before the battle of Atbara in 1898 was a notable performance. Getting out of the train at Shereik on the evening of February 26th, they arrived ten miles north of the Atbara on March 4th, having covered one hundred and thirty-four miles—mostly desert—in six and a half days. In four of these the brigade marched ninety-eight miles! The men were in fine condition, otherwise they could not have stood the strain. As it was, many of them arrived at their destination barefooted, the soles of their boots having come off owing to the rough nature of the country. This, of course, made the march all the more creditable.

As an illustration of a forced march by a small body, the 2nd Shropshire Light Infantry marched forty-three miles in thirty-two hours, and the C.I.V. thirty miles in seventeen hours, in August 1900, in the pursuit of De Wet.

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CHAPTER II.

CAVALRY.

A brief Description of the British Horse Soldiers. How they are clothed and armed, and formed into Troops, Squadrons, and Regiments.

IMAGINE yourself, one fine April morning, in the main street of a small provincial town. The sun is shining brightly, the trees are shooting out little green leaves, and all around you is the freshness and beauty of a lovely spring day. Beyond the roll of an occasional cart along the road, and the tramp of a stray pedestrian, nothing disturbs the quiet of the little town.

Suddenly the stillness is broken. A confused clattering of hoofs, the shrill neigh of a horse, and round a turn in the High Street comes the head of a regiment of British cavalry.

It is the 12th Lancers, as you can see by the blue tunics with the red fronts and cuffs, the lancer-helmets with their queer, square-cut tops and red feathery plumes. And what a fine show the troopers and their horses make! the red and white pennons on the long, slender lances waving in the air; the sun catching every little piece of brass and steel, and making buttons, swords, and stirrup-

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irons shine like a hundred mirrors. The horses are stepping high over the cobblestones, arching their necks, and looking as if they were full of pride at the gallant show their regiment makes. Their riders are sitting bolt upright, in all the glory of scarlet, blue, and gold, fine ruddy specimens of young British manhood, ranging from that downy-lipped youth riding No. 4 in the front rank of the second troop, to that truculent-looking, roughriding corporal with well-curled moustache, and legs packed into such skin-tight breeches and shiny black riding-boots that the wonder is how he ever managed to get into them.

That is a glimpse of a regiment of British cavalry in time of peace.

Hey, presto! The magician waves his wand, time and scene change, and you find yourself standing by a South African river, near a drift or ford. The sun is very hot, and the air is full of sand and flies. You cast your eyes to the south, and see some tiny figures at the far end of the long plain. They rapidly increase in size, and presently take the shape of horsemen moving in little groups of five or six, with long intervals between them. In a short time one of these groups dashes past you, and you see it is composed of men in dirty brown clothes—fighting men, evidently, for each has a rifle hung on one side of his saddle and a sword on the other. They have cartridge belts, too, slung over their shoulders.

The groups close in on the ford, cross it one by one, spread out again on the other side, and ride on, sweeping

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over the country in a great fan. A rolling cloud of dust rises in the south, and a muffled rumbling fills the air.

The men you have just seen cross the river are scouts, thrown out to cover the advance of a large force. That cloud of dust, in fact, heralds the coming of General French's cavalry and horse artillery, which is making a dash to the relief of Kimberley.

Presently long lines of horsemen approach. They converge towards the ford. They must be irregulars, you think, these bearded men on the tired horses, whose coats are matted with sweat and dust. They are wearing broad, brown felt hats; there is no blue, scarlet, or gold about them; no shining top-boots, only dirty brown puttees wrapped round their calves; no glitter of steel accoutrements; no waving plumes; none of that dashing swagger which characterizes the British trooper. They are bronzed, bearded men, workmanlike in appearance, who look as if they had lived all their lives on the veldt. They must be irregulars—Kitchener's Fighting Scouts or Australian Bushmen, probably.

But you are wrong. They are the 12th Lancers on active service.

When a cavalry regiment goes to war, it leaves behind its band and all its brilliant clothes; it takes with it nothing but what will be of use in fighting, and goes clad in sober drab-coloured uniform. It is commanded by a lieutenant-colonel, who is assisted by what is called a "regimental staff." This includes the "second-in-command," a major, who would take charge of the regiment if the

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colonel was killed or wounded, an adjutant, a medical and a veterinary officer, and about forty men for wagon drivers, blacksmiths, etc. (*See Fig. 7.*)

The real fighting part of the regiment consists of three squadrons, each divided, as shown in *Figs. 5* and *6*, into four troops. The machine gun which accompanies the regiment is drawn by two horses, the driver riding the one on the left. It is a handy little weapon, for it is very light, and can pour a stream of bullets at the rate of six hundred a minute on an enemy three-quarters of

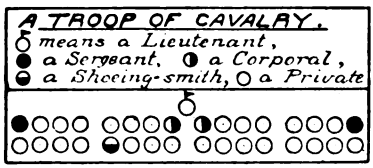

FIG. 5.—A TROOP OF CAVALRY.

The figure shows how a troop consists of one officer and thirty-two men. Four troops, and some additional officers and men, form a squadron. (*See Fig. 6.*)

a mile away. A detachment of three men for working it always rides near the machine gun.

Several wagons and carts accompany the regiment, and are called its "transport." A cart is drawn by two horses, and a wagon by four harnessed two abreast. There is a driver to every pair of horses, and he rides the "near side" one—that is, that on the left. Some of these wagons and carts contain things that are actually wanted on the battlefield, so they march close behind the squadrons. (*See Fig. 7.*) The tools and guncotton (an explosive) carried by the ammunition wagons and the packhorses are for the use of the pioneers. These are twelve men in

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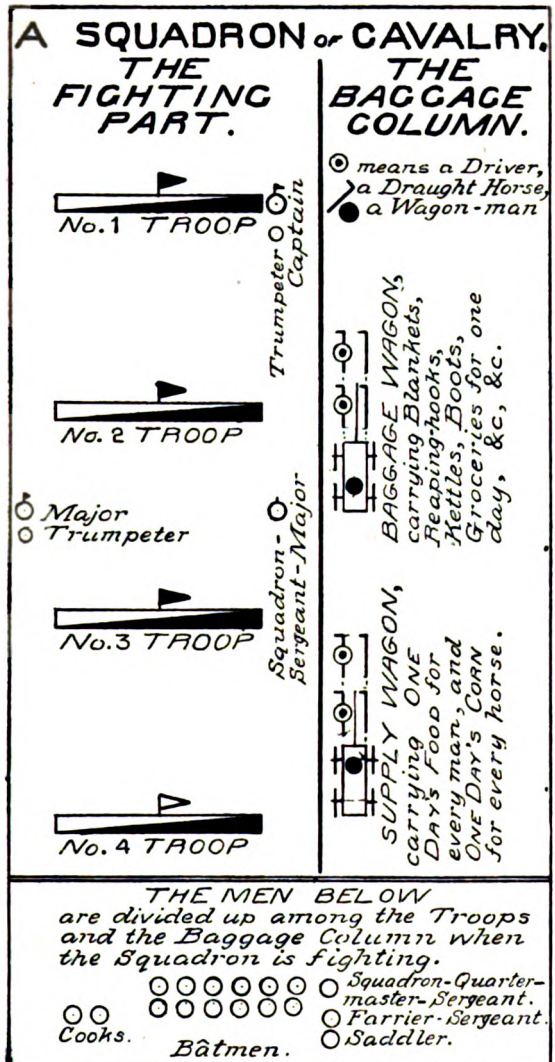

FIG. 6.—A SQUADRON OF CAVALRY.

This figure shows the fighting part of a squadron on the left, and the baggage column on the right. Each of the four troops is composed exactly as shown in *Fig. 5*, so that the squadron consists altogether of 160 officers and men. Three squadrons, and some additional officers, men, and wagons, form a regiment, as shown in *Fig. 7*.

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each squadron who have been taught how to blow up bridges and demolish obstacles with the guncotton, and to make small bridges and shelter trenches with the tools.

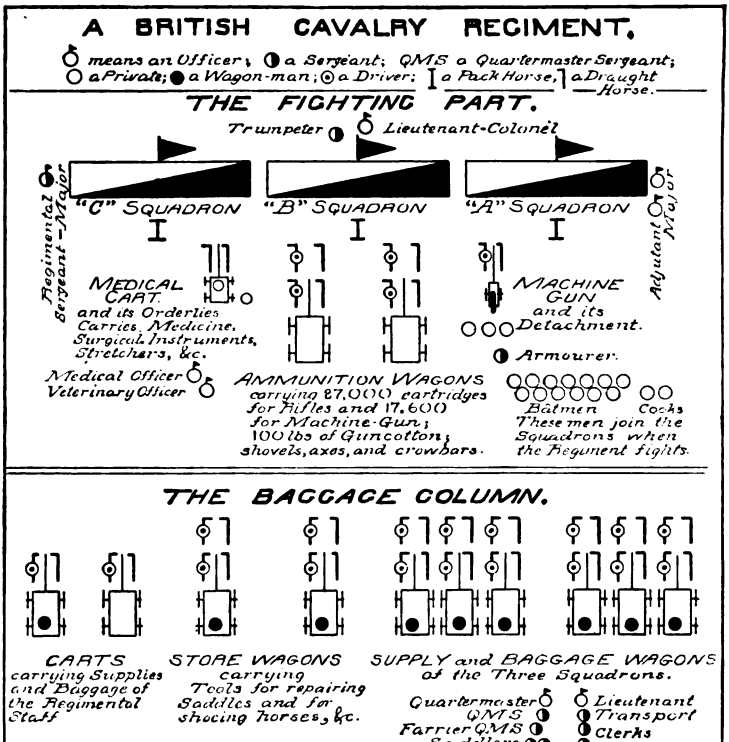

FIG. 7.—A REGIMENT OF CAVALRY.

This figure shows every man in a regiment of cavalry. Each of the three squadrons is composed exactly as shown in *Fig. 6.*

The other wagons (*Fig. 7*) carry food and baggage, and are called the "regimental baggage column." They follow the regiment far enough in rear to be out of danger when

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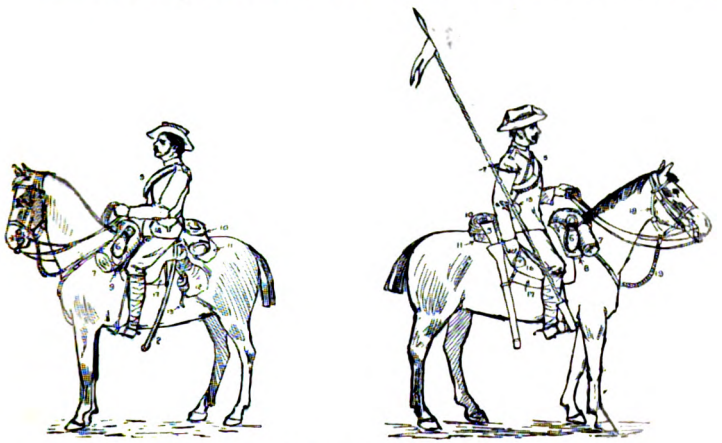
fighting is going on, and yet close enough to be able to catch up with the regiment when it camps for the night in time to issue food to the men and corn to the horses. This distance might be anything between five and ten miles.

Each cavalryman is armed with a rifle and a sabre.



FIGS. 8 AND 8*a*.

The trooper's uniform is the same as that of the infantryman. Until quite recently he was armed with a carbine (3), which he carried in a leather bucket (4), attached to the right side of the saddle by straps. He is now armed with the infantry rifle. This is not shown in *Fig. 8*, but is carried with its butt in a leather case hanging by straps from the saddle near the man's left heel. Its barrel passes through a loop around his left arm, as the lance is carried (*Fig. 8a*). The War Office intends to cut this rifle short, when it will probably be carried as the carbine was. 1 is the loop attaching lance to the arm; 2, the sabre; 3, the carbine; 4, the bucket; 5, the bandolier, carrying cartridges; 6, a pair of boots; 7, a cloak; 8, a saddlebag, holding knife, fork, spoon, brush, comb, towel, emergency ration, etc.; 9, a saddlebag, holding shirt, drawers, socks, currycomb, stable-brush, etc.; 10, breeches and puttees rolled in waterproof sheet; 11, hay net; 12, nosebag, holding corn; 13, picketing ropes; 14, haversack with man's food; 15, water-bottle; 16, two horse-shoes in leather case; 17, numnah and horse-blanket under the saddle; 18, halter; 19, halter-rope twisted up.

In addition to these weapons, all the men in a Lancer regiment, and those in the front rank of a Dragoon regiment, carry lances.

Some of the things which a trooper takes with him

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on active service are shown in *Fig. 8.* The "emergency ration" mentioned there is a sealed tin containing about twelve ounces of condensed food, which is never eaten unless specially ordered by the officer in command. If we suppose the rider to weigh ten and a half stone, then the total load carried by a troop horse, including his saddle and bridle, comes to over eighteen and a half stone.

Cavalrymen always charge in a line of two ranks, with the officers riding in front. The way in which a troop forms line is shown in *Fig. 5:* the distance between the front and rear ranks is equal to a horse's length—that is, about eight feet.

When a squadron is arranged as shown in *Fig. 6*, it is said to be in "squadron column," each of its four troops being in line, as in *Fig. 5.* A squadron is "in line" when its four troops are placed in one long line, each troop formed as in *Fig. 5.* As each trooper occupies about one yard of space, a squadron, therefore, charges in a line about sixty-four yards long, and a whole regiment in a line over two hundred yards long, allowing for intervals between the squadrons.

Cavalry can march from twenty-five to thirty miles fairly comfortably in a day. For long distances like these, the horses are trotted and walked alternately, a brief halt of about ten minutes being made every hour. For short distances, a pace of eight miles an hour can be kept up at a trot, and twelve miles at a gallop. "Charging pace" is about fourteen or fifteen miles an hour. When walking, a horse covers about four miles an hour.

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Occasionally cavalry are called on to make a march of fifty miles in one day for some very urgent reason. This is about the greatest distance which horsemen can travel in twenty-four hours, and the next day they must only be made to do a short march, or the horses will get knocked up. For example, when General French made his dash to the relief of Kimberley in February 1900, he marched one hundred and fifty miles in six days. The strain on the horses was so great, however, that out of five thousand with which he started, nearly fifteen hundred dropped on the road; and when, on the day after his arrival, he was ordered to pursue Cronje, he was only able to mount twelve hundred men!

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CHAPTER III.

ARTILLERY.

IF you want to learn how field artillerymen work their deadly little guns, the best way is to get some one in a battery to take you round and show you everything. If this is not possible, the next best thing you can do is to accompany me in an imaginary stroll which I am just going to take round an artillery barracks.

As we enter the gate we meet a friend of mine, Captain X., riding out. He is "awfully sorry—can't stay to show us round—pressing business engagement."

We "smile in our sleeves," as they say. Did we not see a horse with a side-saddle waiting in?—but there! why should we give the gallant officer away?

"I tell you what I can do, though," he says; "I've got an awfully smart bombardier who will show you round, if you like."

"By all means," we say, and stand chatting with the captain while one of the guard runs across the barrack square in search of the bombardier, which is the corresponding rank to that of second corporal in the infantry.

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"What is that gun?" you inquire, pointing to an old-fashioned piece on a green-painted carriage and wheels near the gate.

"That—oh, that is one of the old field-guns used in the Crimea," replies the captain, "a 9-pounder smooth-bore. Clumsy old thing it looks now compared with our modern guns; but it was useful enough then—used to fire a round shell filled with powder. My governor, who was at the siege of Sebastopol, used to say that you often had to skip to one side when the shells came rolling and bobbing along the ground towards you. You could generally see them coming in the air, and had plenty of time to get out of danger when they did arrive. You see, they had a sort of fuse—a thing like a squib stuck in a hole—and when that burned down, which it took some time to do, the shell burst."

Those old guns were called "muzzle-loaders." They were loaded by ramming a bag of powder down the muzzle, then a big wad, and then a round shot or shell. Very often, after taking all this trouble, the gun would not go off when you tried to fire it. It scarcely carried three-quarters of a mile too, and was very inaccurate at any range.

The bombardier turns up—a fine, well set-up, clean-looking fellow, a thorough type of the dashing, swaggering field-gunner. He fills his smart little jacket to the last fraction of an inch, and looks as if he had grown into his riding-breeches and his glossy boots with the shining, tinkling steel spurs. But with all his fine appearance, the field artilleryman is a workmanlike fellow. What he does

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not know about his handy little field-guns is not worth knowing, and the way he handles them in action invariably excites the admiration of all beholders.

Under his guidance we visit one of the barrack-rooms, a long apartment with a well-scrubbed floor and a row of beds against one wall. On a shelf above each bed is a neat pile of clothes, and from several hooks hang spotless belts with shining buckles, water-bottles, and other well-cleaned accoutrements.

In the stables the same neatness is visible. The stalls are clean, the horses' coats are glossy from their grooming at "midday-stables," and harness and saddles shine like mirrors.

But the thing which interests us most is the gun shed to which our bombardier presently brings us.

Field batteries are armed with six 15-pounder guns—that is to say, guns which fire a shell weighing about fifteen pounds. What is wanted in a field-gun, of course, is that it should be able to hit an enemy who is a long way off, and yet be light enough for a reasonable number of horses to pull easily. It is a very difficult thing to make a gun which satisfies both these requirements, as the lighter you make it, the less range it has. The 15-pounder can fire a shell about three and a half miles; but it is not very effective if the object which it is firing at is more than two and a quarter miles away. It is made by winding strong steel wire round a long steel tube, which is the strongest and lightest way of making a gun which has yet been invented.

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Our bombardier gets a couple of "sights" out of the gun store next to the shed—they are too valuable to leave sticking in the guns—and puts them in two holes, the one half way along the gun, and the other at the back end.

"When the battery goes into action," he says, "the major sends two men out to one side with instruments, called range-finders. By taking angles with these, the men can tell exactly how far the enemy is away.

"Suppose they find this to be 3,000 yards. Do you see these numbers, running up to 6,000, marked on the sight at the back end of the gun? Well, you make the sight stick up—like this—until you get the number '3,000' which is marked on it opposite this line. Then you swing the gun from right to left, or raise it or lower it, until you get the two sights in a line with your target. That is what we call 'laying' or aiming the gun."

Seizing a steel lever at the rear end of the gun, the bombardier gives it a pull and opens the end of the gun.

"The 15-pounder is what we call a B.L. gun," he remarks—"that is to say, a breech-loader. This thing I have just pulled out is called the breech-block. Would you like to see the gun loaded and fired?"

We hesitate. We do not like to say that it looks a dangerous thing to do here—he ought to know better than we. The bombardier laughs.

"Here, Bill," he calls to one of a group of men cleaning the guns, "bring me a dummy cartridge and a drill-

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shell from the store." "These are the same size as the real articles, but, of course, they have no powder in them," he adds, as Bill returns with his burden.

The bombardier puts the shell in the breech of the gun, and after it the cartridge, and then shuts the breech. (*See Fig. 9.*)

"The real cartridge is made of cordite," he says, "and looks like a bundle of pieces of string wrapped in a bit of muslin. It makes no smoke when the gun is fired."

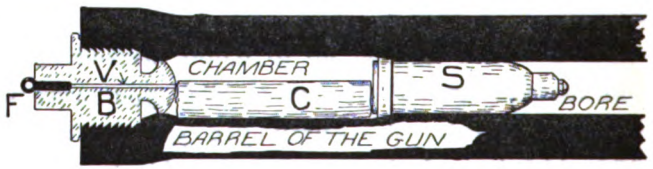

FIG. 9.—HOW A FIELD-GUN IS LOADED AND FIRED.

B is the breech-block. If you give a sharp pull to a small steel lever—which is not shown in the figure—the breech-block twists half round, slides out of the gun, and swings open on a hinge. You then place the shell (S) in the chamber, and push it well into the bore, afterwards placing the cartridge (C) in the chamber. You then close the breech again. By jerking the "friction tube" (F), a flash is sent down the vent (V), which fires the cartridge. This drives the shell down the bore of the gun, which has spiral grooves cut in it. These grooves—called "rifling"—cut into the copper band shown on the shell, as the band is slightly larger in diameter than the bore. This causes the shell to revolve rapidly as it passes down the bore and after it leaves the gun, which results in its travelling point foremost.

He takes a little thing shaped like a T, which he calls a "friction tube," sticks the end through a hole in the breech-block, attaches a cord with a hook to an eye on the tube, and gives it a sharp jerk.

"That fires the cartridge," he says.

"Supposing you forgot to shut the breech-block tight?" you ask.

"Then you could not fire the gun," replies the bombardier, "on account of this little safety catch which you

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A 15-POUNDER FIRING THE OLD-FASHIONED SMOKE POWDER.

Gunner No. 3, on the left, has just pulled the lanyard firing the gun; No. 1 is standing behind him; Nos. 2 and 4 are kneeling on the right, No. 4 looking this way.

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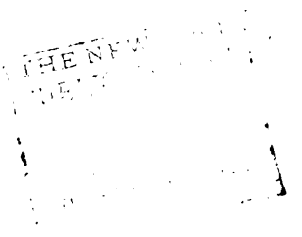

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see here. That used not to be the case, though. When our battery sergeant-major was a recruit, twenty years ago, he was one of a detachment firing for practice. The breech was not properly closed, and blew out. He had a narrow escape. The men on each side of him were killed; and one poor chap, who was standing over two hundred yards behind the gun, had his brains knocked out. You would have thought he'd have been safe there!"

The field artillery shell is called a "shrapnel," and has a small brass instrument, called a fuse, screwed in its point. (*See Fig. 10.*) When the gun is fired, a little train of powder in the fuse is lighted by the shock of the discharge, and this eventually explodes the bursting charge in the shell.

The bombardier shows us

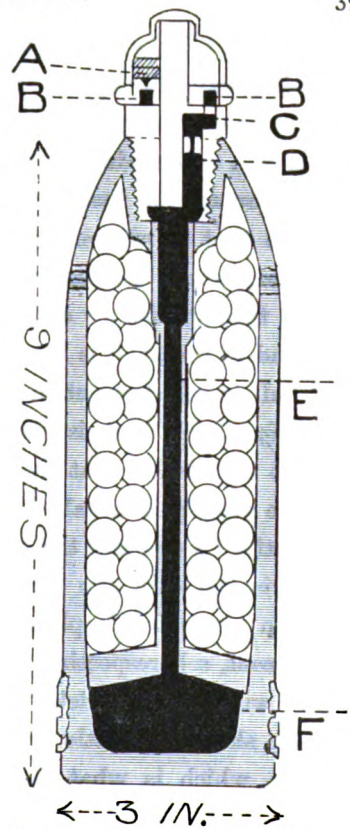

FIG. 10.—A SHRAPNEL SHELL WITH A TIME FUSE.

In the picture the shell has been cut down the middle so as to show the inside. The shock of firing the gun knocks the hammer (A) on to a detonating cap, which promptly lights a "time ring" of powder (B, B) which runs round the fuse. A hole (C) can be placed so that the flame running along the "time ring" will reach it after a certain number of seconds. The flame then passes through the hole, and lights the powder (D). This fires the powder in the shell channel (E), which explodes the bursting charge (F), bursts the shell, and fires out all the bullets, as shown in *Fig. 11.*

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how to "set" the fuse, so that the shell can either be exploded immediately, or a certain number of seconds, after it leaves the gun.

"If you are aiming at an enemy two miles away," he says, "you set the fuse by twisting this little ring round thus, so that it will explode the shell after it has been travelling about ten seconds. By that time it will be falling through the air on to the enemy. When it bursts, the head of the shell is blown off, and two hundred round lead bullets are shot out in a shower on the enemy's heads. (*See Fig. 11.*) That is what we call a 'time fuse.' If you set the fuse so that the shell will not explode until it hits the ground, it is called a 'percussion fuse.'"

"Is the 15-pounder the only gun you use?" you ask.

"It is the only one *we* have," replies the bombardier, with an air which implies that it is the only gun which any decent, self-respecting battery would allow itself to be armed with. "Some field batteries have a 5-inch howitzer. It is a short, fat, little gun, and fires a shell filled with lyddite, which is what they call a 'high explosive.' It does a terrible lot of damage, especially if it explodes in a confined place—say in a road between two high hedges, or in a house. If it does not kill you, it stains you a bright yellow!"

The 5-inch howitzer also fires shrapnel shell, and is especially useful for the way in which it can "search," as they call it, the ground in hilly country. For instance, a field-gun shell, when it is fired, rises a little to begin with, then goes along more or less horizontally for a time, and

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then begins gradually to descend. Consequently, if you fire at an enemy behind a high hill, and your shell just clears the top, it will probably pass over his head and go a long way further before falling to the earth. But a howitzer shell, which is fired right up into the air, falls very sharply after it has got to the top of its flight. So if it just clears the hill-top, it will strike the ground only a short distance behind, and quite possibly in the

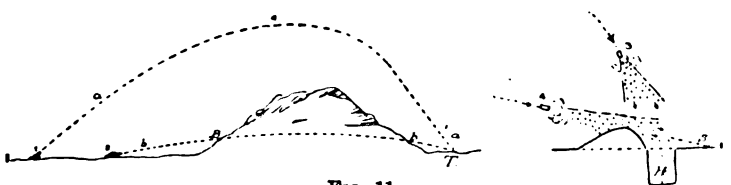

FIG. 11.

The left-hand picture shows the advantage possessed by a howitzer over a field-gun when firing over a hill at some troops at T. 1 is the howitzer, and *a*, *a*, *a* is the track of its shell. 2 is the field-gun, and *b*, *b* would be the path of its shell were it not stopped at B by the hill.

The right-hand picture compares the effects on a trench of a shell from a howitzer and a shell from a field-gun. 3 is the howitzer's shrapnel shell bursting and pouring its bullets into the trench; but you will notice that the parapet of earth protects the occupants of the trench from the bullets of the field-gun's shrapnel shell, which is bursting at 4.

Both of these shells are fitted with "time fuses," which make them explode in the air as shown. If they were fitted with "percussion fuses," the howitzer shell would fall to the bottom of the trench, and explode at H; while the field-gun shell would not burst until it hit the ground at S.

In both pictures, the howitzer is firing at a range of 2¾ miles—that is, it is 2¾ miles from the target—and the field-gun at a range of 2¼ miles.

midst of the enemy. This, of course, you will not know, as, unless you have a balloon, or some other way of directing your fire, you will not be able to see how near to the enemy your shells are dropping. For all you know, you may be merely wasting ammunition. (*See Fig. 11.*)

"How long do you take to load and fire a gun?" you ask the bombardier.

"Well, that depends a good deal, sir," he replies. "If

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you are hard put to it, you can get a shot off every ten or fifteen seconds; but it is awful hard work."

"Where do you carry all the shells and cartridges?"

"There are one hundred rounds in each of those wagons," says the bombardier, pointing to a limber wagon similar in appearance to the gun carriage and limber. "When a battery goes into action, each section has one of its wagons a few yards behind it. (*See Fig. 13.*) When all the shells and cartridges in that wagon are used, the other

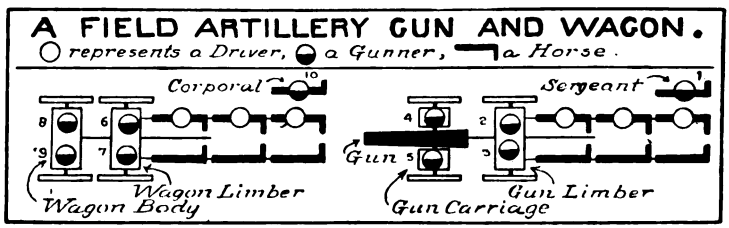

FIG. 12.—A FIELD ARTILLERY GUN AND WAGON.

This figure shows where each of the ten gunners and six drivers belonging to a field-gun and its ammunition wagon rides. Each of the gunners is given a number, and has certain fixed duties to perform when the gun is in action, as shown in *Fig. 13.* Forty shrapnel shells and cartridges are carried in each limber, and sixty in the wagon body. Six guns and six wagons form a battery, and two guns and two wagons a "section."

wagon is brought up. When that is empty, you begin to use the forty rounds which are carried in each gun limber. When those are gone, then you are reduced to the two which are in each gun carriage. After that, unless there is an ammunition column handy, you have to come out of action." *

"Do you often use up all your ammunition?" you ask.

"No, sir; it is the exception. At Modder River battle,

* The reader will find a description of an "ammunition column," and the way it supplies a battery with more ammunition, on page 326.

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the 18th Field Battery did, for they fired over eleven hundred rounds. So did the 75th; they fired nine hundred. But we were not there all the time, and only managed to get rid of five hundred."

Here is a chance! The bombardier was at Modder River! We ply him with questions—he *must* tell us all about it.

"Well, sir, there is really not much to tell," he says modestly, leaning against the gun wheel. "You see, it was like this. After the battle of Enslin, we of the 62nd Battery were ordered to catch up with Lord Methuen's army, as another battle was expected. We marched over twenty miles the first day, and about twenty-three the second, when we heard the guns going hard to the north. So, without any halt for a rest, off we went in the heat and dust, a swarm of flies hanging over each horse, and worrying him and his rider to death.

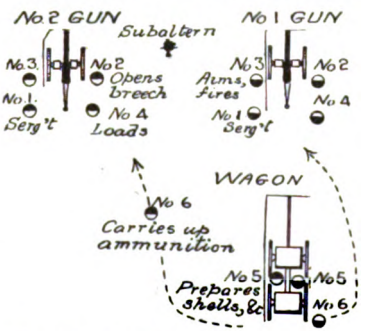

FIG. 13.—HOW ARTILLERYMEN WORK THEIR GUNS IN ACTION.

This figure shows a section, which is one-third of a battery, in action. It consists of two guns and two ammunition wagons, and is commanded by a subaltern. Each man is given a number, and has a certain duty to perform. Gunners No. 7, 8, and 9, together with the drivers, teams, and gun limbers, and the ammunition wagon of No. 2 gun, are not shown in the figure. They conceal themselves behind a hill or a wood, or in a hollow somewhere near the guns.

"I shall never forget that march, sir. We tried to trot, but after a bit some of the horses in the gun teams fell dead, and we were reduced to a walk. Messengers kept coming to ask us to hurry up, and we guessed our

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troops were not having the best of it. We did our utmost to go as fast as possible; the sergeants, and even the officers, hooked their horses on to the guns. At last, somehow or other, we got there. I am sure I don't know how we did.

"It was a rum sight—would have been funny, if it had not been for the poor chaps who were occasionally carried past us covered with blood. For there was a great army, all lying down, not budging an inch, and yet not an enemy in sight! A continual roar was going on from the Boers' guns and rifles, and it seemed to me as if our two batteries, the 18th and 75th, and the sailors' guns, were the only ones replying to it.

"We came into action as quick as we could get our poor tired horses unhooked; we were then about fifteen hundred yards away, and several were hit. After firing for a bit, we got the order to limber up and advance. How we managed to get our teams up, and then drag the guns forward, I can't tell to this day. We half-walked, half-trotted to within half a mile of the enemy, right on the left of our line. He had a couple of guns there which were annoying our infantry. We unlimbered again, and came into action under a terrible fire. Two of the chaps working with me were killed, and the whole battery was the centre of an awful fire from the enemy's rifles.

"Somehow or other we did not seem to mind. Perhaps it was because we were dead tired. Anyhow, I seemed in a kind of a daze. I remember loading, and opening

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and shutting the breech, my head and feet feeling so light that it made me laugh. After a time the teams came up again, and as we limbered up an officer came along and said, 'Well done, men! You've put their guns out of action!'

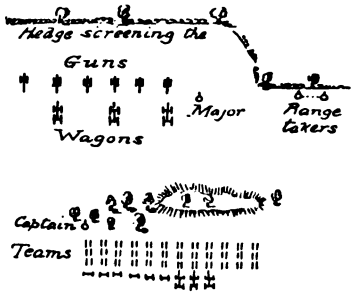

FIG. 14.—A FIELD BATTERY IN ACTION.

Showing how the teams, etc., take shelter behind woods, hills, etc., while the guns are firing.

"We might have, but we didn't know it. Anyhow, we were precious glad to get back behind the ridge for a change. But it was not for long; they could not do without the guns that day. We advanced once more, every now and then unhooking a horse from the teams, and leaving him to mark our track. One or two, when they were released, staggered about screaming, poor beggars; but generally they were too tired, and lay where they fell.

"This time we got closer than ever. I have heard since that we were only half a mile from the Boer shelter trenches. Their bullets were falling on the sand just as if you were throwing handfuls of pebbles into water. We fired hard—about five shots a minute from each gun for some time; but of course we were too done up to keep that rate up for long. After a while, the enemy's fire began to slacken; he had had enough of it. When we stopped firing at last, we made an effort to get things a bit into order, and then fell on the sand

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beside our guns, too done up to eat. I think I was asleep before my head reached the ground."

The battery which the bombardier has just shown us round belongs to the Royal Field Artillery. One difference between it and a battery of Royal Horse Artillery is that, in the latter, the guns used are only 12-pounders, which have a slightly smaller range and shell. Another difference, as you will see by looking at *Figs. 12* and *15*, is that all the men in the R.H.A. are mounted on horses, whereas in the Field Artillery four men ride on each gun and four on each ammunition wagon. You often see mistakes in pictures owing to ignorance of the above fact on the part of artists, many of them drawing gunners sitting on the limbers with their jackets all braided across the front with gold lace. It is only horse artillerymen who wear gold lace on their breasts.

The reason for horse artillerymen all being mounted is that they usually fight in company with cavalry. They

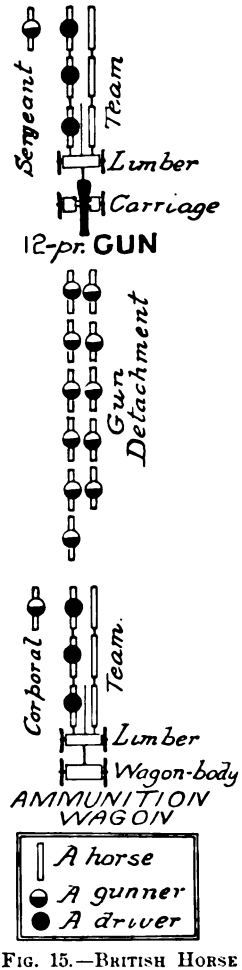

FIG. 15.—BRITISH HORSE ARTILLERY.

A 12-pounder gun on the march, followed by the men who work it and its ammunition wagon. Two guns form a section, under command of a subaltern; and six guns form a battery, under command of a major.

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must be able to go wherever a horseman can, and so are often required to gallop over very rough ground. The guns and limbers jump about over stones and ditches like peas on a hot pan, and no one could possibly sit on them for long. On the other hand, a field battery need only be capable of accompanying infantry, so, as it generally moves at a walking pace, the men can sit fairly comfortably on the limbers and carriages. (*N.B.—The two wheels the gun is on are called the "carriage."*) When it comes into action, though, it trots or gallops, so as to get the teams out of the way quickly, and expose them to the enemy's fire for as short a time as possible. When doing this on rough ground, the two gunners who are shown in *Fig. 12* on the gun carriage get off and mount the "off-horses" of the team, which are all saddled.

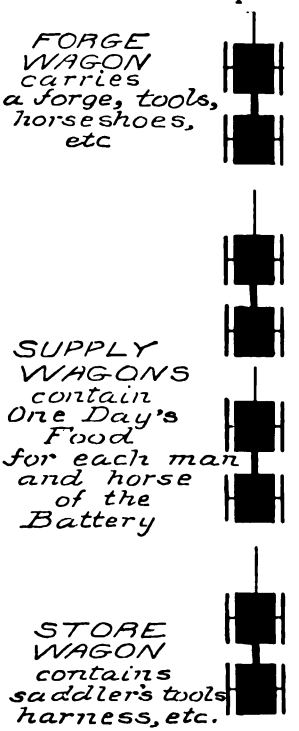
FORGE WAGON carries a forge, tools, horseshoes, etc
SUPPLY WAGONS contain One Day's Food for each man and horse of the Battery
STORE WAGON contains saddler's tools harness, etc.

FIG. 16.—THE BAGGAGE COLUMN of a battery of field or horse artillery. Each wagon is drawn by six horses, and has three drivers.

As horse and field artillerymen do not carry rifles, they have nothing to defend themselves with except swords and revolvers should the enemy's cavalry or infantry suddenly appear and attack them. Hence an escort is usually sent to protect a battery when it goes into action.

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For a horse artillery battery this escort is generally cavalry; for a field battery, infantry.

How Artillery Fights.

The incident I am about to relate will give you some idea of the difficulty of working a gun, and also of withdrawing it from action should the enemy's infantry get within half a mile of it. A rifleman finds it very easy to conceal himself behind a small rock or bush, or in a slight hollow in the ground, where he can lie and fire without being seen by an enemy three-quarters of a mile away. But it is very difficult—almost impossible unless there are a lot of big rocks or hedges—to conceal a field-gun and the men working it at this distance. The teams and drivers make a very conspicuous target for the enemy when they gallop up to bring the guns out of action, and suffer losses even at a range of one and a half miles.

When you have read the following story, which describes how a section of two guns goes into action, you will understand how a whole field battery fights, for the method adopted is similar. Here is the incident:—

A couple of field-guns, followed by their ammunition wagons, are marching along a rough, sandy track with a small column of British troops in South Africa. The young artillery subaltern commanding this section rides along, bolt upright in his saddle, a few yards ahead of his leading gun. The atmosphere is wonderfully clear this fine morning, and the subaltern can occasionally see through his field-glasses little brown patches of colour

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rising and falling over the uneven ground some three or four miles ahead of him. These are the scouts of the force—a troop or two of cavalry extended in a line of patrols about three miles long. (*See Fig. 7.*) Now disappearing into a kloof, now climbing the sides of a kopje, they examine the country thoroughly, to find out if any Boers are lying concealed in hope of surprising the British column.

About a mile ahead a turn in the road reveals the vanguard of the force—a few cavalry and some infantry. Toiling along about a quarter of a mile behind them come the rest of the advanced guard, consisting entirely of infantry. (*See Fig. 17.*)

Two companies are marching immediately in front of the young subaltern, and the dust they raise occasionally blows into his face, fills his eyes, and half chokes him. But he is used to it; for, in the many marches he has made, the infantry have always been placed at the head of the column to set the pace.

In front of the two companies rides the colonel commanding the force, accompanied by two or three officers and a cavalry orderly. Occasionally a trooper comes cantering back along the road, reins up sharp, salutes smartly, and hands a little piece of paper—a report from the cavalry patrols—to the colonel.

The guns and wagons of the section lurch and roll along the uneven road. The drivers remain mounted on the "near" horses of each pair, but the gunners have descended from their usual seats on the gun limbers and

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carriages and the ammunition wagons in order to lighten the load, and are trudging along beside them.

Behind the artillery march the rest of the infantry. One company has been detached: one half follows a quarter of a mile behind as a rearguard, and the other half a mile in rear of that again, escorting the baggage wagons of the various units in the force.

Our subaltern yawns, takes a pull at the water-bottle hanging at his left side, and lights a pipe to soothe his mind; for he is beginning to grow impatient. They have been marching, marching, marching for a whole week without having seen a single decent-sized body of Boers.

He sweeps the country with his field-glasses, and sees nothing but khaki, when he sees anything. In the rear, infantry in khaki; on each side, a mile and a half away, khaki horsemen moving parallel with the column to guard against an enemy surprising it from the flanks. Far out ahead, still those——

Hallo! what was that? A distant report, then another, then a faint, muttering noise. By George! it is the enemy at last, right out in front, and in force, too, judging by the noise of the rifle fire.

An electric shock seems to pass through the whole force. The men straighten their backs and step out, and the whole column swings along at an increased pace. Jokes are bandied about, and the ranks are full of cheerfulness. There is going to be a fight!

A trooper comes tearing down the road at full gallop,

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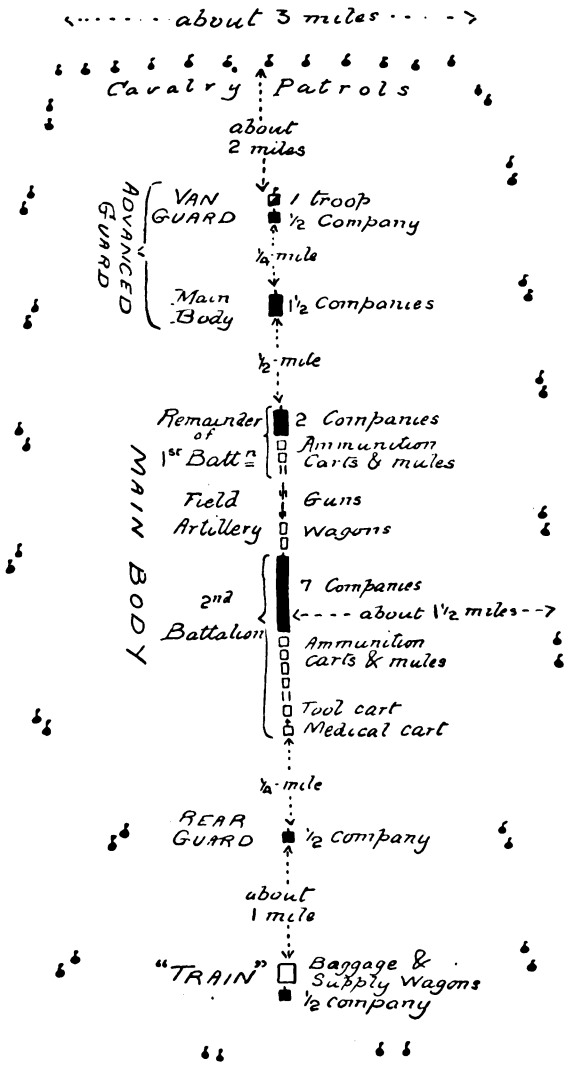

FIG. 17.—A BRITISH COLUMN ON THE MARCH.

This diagram shows how a small column of one and a half battalions, one squadron, and one section of field artillery marches.

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his horse sweating and coated with dust; presently another comes, then another. Reports are rolling in to the colonel. Still the column swings along.

In a short time our subaltern is sent for by the colonel, who tells him that the Boers are occupying a high hill, which he points out, about three miles ahead. He is ordered to bring his guns into action at once near two kopjes about half-way between the advancing column and the Boers' hill, and a little to the right of the road. These kopjes, he is told, are occupied by the cavalry.

The subaltern salutes, and rejoins his section. The gunners climb on to their seats, the infantry makes way, and guns and wagons set off at a trot, bumping and rocking so much over the rough road that the men sitting on them have to hold on tight. Half a mile from the two kopjes, the subaltern turns off the road to the right, gives the order "walk," leaves the section to follow him under the charge of the senior sergeant, and gallops off with the other to select a good place for his guns.

As he approaches the kopjes, shielded by them from the enemy's view, he notices that some of the scouts have gathered behind them for shelter. Dismounting, he throws his reins to the sergeant, and runs up on foot. At the top are a couple of officers and several men, crouching behind rocks, the former watching the hill away in front with their glasses.

Our subaltern finds a good position here, about one and three-quarter miles from the enemy—a capital dis-

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tance, as it is far enough to make it extremely difficult for the Boer riflemen to hit his men, and close enough to get very accurate fire with his 15-pounders, if he can only see any one to fire at. But—and a very big "but"—half a mile to the right is another kopje, strewn with large boulders, and sufficiently close to make his chosen position a very hot corner if the enemy is on it. A careful survey with his glasses, however, convinces him that it is held by the British cavalry, whose horses he can see at the foot.

He descends the hill, remounts, gallops towards the approaching guns, and gives the order,—

"Halt! Prepare for action!"

"Percussion shrapnel—load!" order the sergeants.

The gunners jump down, open the breeches of the guns, ram in the shells, shove in the cartridges, close the breeches, put the sights in the socket-holes for aiming, and mount into their places again.

"Walk—march," orders the subaltern.

The hill is taken with a rush and a scramble, one wagon being left at the foot. Arrived at the top, the section trots forward to within twenty yards of a group of boulders, large enough to shield the guns partially from the enemy's view.

A muffled "a-rub a-dub, a-rub a-dub-dub" greets the ears of the gunners as they momentarily show up on the sky-line of the kopje. It is the sound of rifles firing from somewhere far off. Exactly from where nobody knows, for no Boers can be seen, but the most likely place for

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them is on that big hill one and three-quarter miles away to the front. The range is great, and the guns are moving fast, so no one is hit, but the bullets sing through the air and ricochet off the rocks with a "spang-g-g."

"Halt! Action front!" signals the subaltern with two waves of his arm.

"Action front!" repeat the sergeants, also by signals.

The drivers pull up their teams, the gunners jump down, two lift the trail off the hook at the back of the limber, and two man the wheels of each gun; the teams drive on with the limbers, the guns are spun round, and in three seconds are ready for firing. The teams and limbers of the guns, and the team of the ammunition wagon, retire behind the hill, taking the subaltern's charger.

The subaltern scans the opposite hillside carefully with his glasses. The bullets are "zipping" and "zunging" round, but not a Boer or a puff of smoke can he see. A momentary flash near a huge white boulder gives him his first clue.

"Two thousand six hundred yards," he says, and indicates the boulder, which has been caught by the sun's rays, and is fairly conspicuous, to his sergeants.

The sights are set at 2,600 yards, the gun is aimed, and the gunners stand clear of the recoil.

"Fire, No. 1 gun," from the subaltern, and "No. 1—Fire!" from the sergeant.

Bang! and the shell, with a percussion fuse in it, sails away towards the enemy.

"Short, hang it!" mutters the subaltern, as a little

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puff of smoke rises at the foot of the Boers' hill, showing where the shell dropped. "Try 2,900," to the sergeant of No. 2 gun.

The second shell bursts close alongside the white boulder. This satisfies the subaltern, and he gives the order to fire with "time shrapnel," settling himself down to watch the effect of the shells as both guns fire alternately.

Each gun is discharged every half minute, and as the enemy is still invisible, the target is altered every shot, and the shells explode in little white puffs all along the front of the Boers' hill. Each gunner has his own particular duties to do, and goes about them as coolly and quietly as if on the barrack parade-ground. It might be a field day at home, if it were not for the ping of the bullets, and—what is that?

A gunner falls back, clutching at his breast with both hands. He is badly hit, poor chap. The corporal of the wagon left behind the hill has been lying beside a rock at the top, so that he can see both the guns and his own wagon. He signals to the men at the foot, and the three spare gunners of the gun run up; two remove the wounded man, and the third takes his place.

After about half an hour, our subaltern notices that the infantry have come up behind a kopje across the road on his left, and are evidently on the point of starting an attack against the enemy's right, for several cavalry patrols are visible, making a wide circuit round the end of the Boers' position.

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Just then, however, his attention is attracted by a sharp rattle of musketry proceeding from the kopje half a mile to his right, which he had observed on his first arrival.

"Our fellows are being attacked there," he thinks. "If they don't hang on to it, we must clear out of this."

At that moment he feels a sharp prick in his shoulder, followed by a curious numbing sensation, and almost simultaneously three of his men are knocked over. They are at once replaced, the guns are dragged round, and a hot fire is directed on the kopje, which the enemy has apparently obtained possession of by some means or other. Both guns are discharged as fast as they can be loaded at the rocks on the side of the kopje; for, though only 800 yards away, not a Boer is visible.

Casualties now follow each other fast and furious. The spare gunners, and those issuing the ammunition from the wagons, are gradually all called on to work the guns, and finally no one is left behind the hill but the drivers and their teams. The subaltern is struck again, in the arm this time; his men still keep dropping, killed or wounded, and he sees that he must retire. A wounded gunner crawls off to signal to the teams to come; scarcely has he done so than he falls riddled with bullets.

With a clashing and jingle of harness the drivers gallop their teams up the kopje; but the instant they come into view three or four horses roll over, and the remainder are thrown into a tangled knot of confusion. Only for a moment, though; the fallen horses are rapidly cast off, and another attempt is made to get to the guns. This is

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equally futile; several horses and drivers are shot, and the remainder retire.

Meanwhile the guns are still firing, but the intervals between the shots grow longer and longer, as the gunners fall one by one. One detachment is reduced to three, the other to four, and the subaltern, with a bloody handkerchief round his arm, is himself helping in the work.

In another five minutes only four men are left; the ground around is strewn with dead and wounded men and horses. But this noble quartette belongs to a regiment which traditionally dies by its guns, and has not the slightest intention of retiring. The subaltern is hit a third time, and presently finds himself loading and firing, while the only other survivor runs quietly to and fro between the gun and the wagon, bringing up ammunition.

The young officer reels—he is faint from loss of blood—and drops senseless beside his gun.

"It's about time I was off," thinks the last of the gunners, coming up at that moment with a shell. "I'll just give them this one, though."

So the gun is laid for the last time, very coolly and deliberately. The shell flies straight and true, and bursts, as the gunner says, "very nicely." He then, without undue haste, removes the breech-block of the gun, so as to render it useless to the enemy should they capture it, and carrying that and the inanimate form of his officer, walks quietly back over the hill.

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CHAPTER IV.

A MODERN ARMY.

YOU have now, reader, made the acquaintance of the three chief fighting men of the British army—namely, the foot soldier, the horseman, and the gunner. Having arrived thus far, why should we not sit down, take paper and pencil, and make up an army with which we could take the field against some civilized, highly-trained European force? You agree? Come on, then!

First of all, what are we to have—infantry, cavalry, or artillery, or a mixture of the three?

If we compose our army entirely of infantry, it will be a very slow-moving concern. The enemy will be able to trot around us, out of rifle range, and make sudden attacks on us from unexpected quarters. We cannot send our footmen running out ten or fifteen miles ahead, and to each side of us, to find out where the enemy is and what he is doing; they cannot move fast enough to get back in time to warn us of an attack. So, for this work, we must have some horsemen in our army. Also, although an army of infantry can deliver a very hot rifle fire, yet

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it cannot hit an enemy very far off. Therefore, we must have some artillery in our army.

So we arrive at the conclusion that, to be capable of carrying out all sorts of operations, our force will have to be a mixture of horse, foot, and artillery.

The next question is—of which of the three shall we have the most?

Artillery? No; because artillery is not of much use in mountainous countries, on account of the difficulties of marching; its advance can also be stopped by blowing up bridges over rivers. Decidedly, it would not do to have the bulk of our army brought to a standstill by things of this sort. Besides that, by creeping up under cover of hedges and rocks, the enemy's riflemen, themselves unseen, will soon kill off our gunners and horses, who cannot easily conceal themselves. Then, just think of the expense of providing several thousand guns, and the tremendous number of horses we shall want to drag them, and the great train of wagons carrying all the ammunition!

That leaves us infantry and cavalry to choose from—of which shall we have the most? If it is a matter of considering the expense, we shall not be long in making up our minds. A man and a horse cost more to train and more to feed than a man only. Then, which are the best fighting men?

Six hundred years ago we should have said "cavalry." There were no firearms then—that is the reason. Armies consisted almost entirely of horsemen, who rode down

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and crushed with spear and battle-axe any unfortunate foot soldiers who stood up to them, unless the ground was very rough and bad for horses to get about on. Our English archers were the first to put a stop to that, when, at Creçy, the French cavalry, fifty or sixty thousand strong, went down before their arrows like grass before a scythe.

Then muskets came into use, and although for a long time they were heavy, slow-firing things, yet they enabled the foot soldiers, as long as they kept steadily in their ranks, to resist horsemen far better than they had hitherto done. Consequently, all the countries of Europe began to increase the number of infantry in their armies and to decrease the cavalry. They were all the more pleased to do this on account of the saving effected in pay and the cost of horses.

In the great wars of Napoleon, at the beginning of the last century, cavalry were still valuable as fighting men. One hundred years ago, as you have already read, foot soldiers were armed with a musket which had a fair range of only two hundred yards. It was no mean achievement to hit a house with it even at that short distance! Consequently, the opposing armies had to approach very close to each other to use their firearms with any effect, and there was much hand-to-hand fighting, in which cavalry took a very large share, and often changed the whole fortune of the day by a brilliant charge.

Nowadays, all this has been greatly altered; for the modern rifle, with its long range and accurate and rapid

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fire, has made the infantry soldier a far more dangerous person. Armies no longer have to draw close together to hit each other with bullet and shell. Hand-to-hand fighting through *the whole* of a long and bloody day has disappeared. It still takes place, but by far the larger part of a modern battle is fought with a great distance between the opposing forces. It is only by means of crouching behind hedges and in hollows, creeping up ditches, and crawling from tree to tree and rock to rock, that one army can get within charging distance of another. Naturally, this kind of tactics does not suit cavalry at all. To produce the best effect, horsemen must charge in close order, side by side, knee touching knee. What a magnificent target such a body makes for a steady line of infantry, each man with his magazine open, and his rifle spitting lead at the rate of ten bullets in half a minute! Could a cavalryman get within two hundred yards of that line?

This is what Prince Kraft, the famous German soldier, says about a charge made by the French cavalry at the battle of Vionville, thirty years ago:—

"Well mounted, well equipped, and capitally led, the Cuirassiers charged in excellent order and with the greatest possible exactness and courage. But their splendid horses fell in masses under a well-aimed fire. The centre of the line which went straight at the infantry was annihilated. Then the two wings swung away from each other, were fired on as they passed by the battalion, and then ran the gauntlet of the skirmishers and supports. In a few minutes

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nothing remained of this magnificent regiment of cavalry but a few scattered troopers, who had scarcely succeeded in cutting down a single soldier."

There were no magazine rifles then, so I think that we have no difficulty in making up our minds that by far the largest part of our army must be infantry, as, thanks to modern firearms, the foot soldier is a more useful fighting man than the horseman.

We must not, however, forget that mounted men have by no means lost their value altogether as fighters. Cavalry can still charge infantry successfully, *if they can manage to surprise them.* For instance, suppose that a regiment of cavalry remains concealed behind a wood or a hill until the enemy's infantry are within a few hundred yards of it. If the cavalrymen then dash out and fall suddenly on the infantrymen, the latter, very possibly, will not have time to resist the charge. But the opportunities for this kind of tactics are rare, and a great deal of cavalry fighting is now, curious to say, done on foot. A trooper uses his horse to advance and retire with, and for scouting, but in fighting he generally dismounts and uses his rifle. There are exceptions to this, of course—as, for instance, in the case just mentioned. Also, against infantry who are in disorder, or against another body of cavalry, a charge is still as successful as it was in days of yore.

So now, summing up, we will form our army chiefly of infantrymen, because they are better fighters than any other soldiers under modern conditions; because they can go over any sort of country, however rough; and because

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they are easier to train, and cost us less money to keep, than any other arm.

Then we add a certain number of mounted men—either cavalry or mounted infantry—for reconnoitring, which means discovering the whereabouts of the enemy, finding out all his movements, and reporting them to the general; for frustrating the enemy's cavalry in its attempts to gain corresponding information; and for guarding the army against surprise. We also want them for use in cases where speed is necessary. For instance, we can send

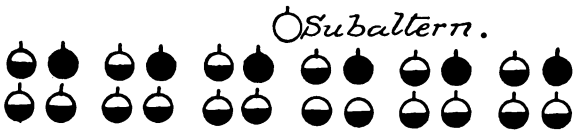

FIG. 18.—A SECTION OF MOUNTED INFANTRY.

This figure shows how a section of mounted infantry consists of six groups of four men, one of whom—shown in black—acts as commander of the group. The men in the group are taught to work together, and to rely on each other when scouting and fighting.

Mounted infantry are, as the name implies, infantrymen mounted on horses, which they merely use to travel rapidly with. They fight on foot, and cannot charge on horseback as cavalry can, for they have no swords or lances. Four sections form a company. (*See Fig. 19.*)

them trotting miles ahead to capture some important place and hold it until the rest of our army arrives, which, at its slow walking-pace, it will not do for several hours. If our troops in one part of a battlefield need reinforcements urgently, we can send mounted men, who will reach them very much quicker than foot soldiers could. And this is worth taking into consideration, for a modern battle often extends over twenty miles of front!

Finally, we complete our fighting forces by adding a large number of batteries of artillery for firing at the

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enemy from afar off, making him lose many men when attacking us, and keeping him lying down in his trenches by bombarding him over the heads of our own infantry while we are advancing to assault him.

In addition, we want some engineers for overcoming the difficulties of our advance, making bridges, constructing fortifications, and doing many other things. Also, of course, army service corps for feeding us, and medical corps for looking after our sick and wounded.

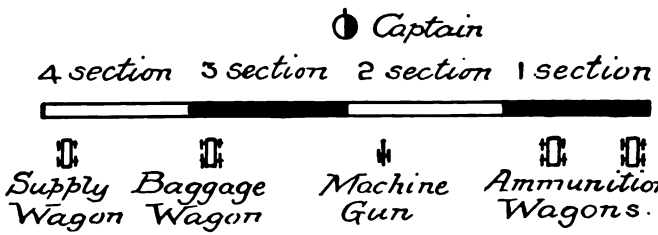

FIG. 19.—A COMPANY OF MOUNTED INFANTRY.

It is commanded by a captain, and consists roughly of 120 men, who are formed into four sections, as shown in *Fig. 18*. Four companies make a battalion.

So there is our modern army! Now, look at *Fig. 20*, which shows a force called a British "army corps." Does this army agree with what we have decided on? Let us examine it and see. This particular army corps, by the way, is the one which we are presently going to accompany when it embarks for a certain foreign country to fight against Britain's enemies.

You will notice that it is formed of three "divisions," each of which is a small army in itself, numbering about ten thousand men, and containing infantry, cavalry, and artillery. Take, for instance, the 3rd Division.

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The 3rd Division is chiefly composed of two bodies of foot soldiers, called the 5th and 6th Infantry Brigades. Each of these brigades consists of four battalions, with a company of the Army Service Corps (A.S.C.) to feed it, a bearer company to pick up the wounded men in battle, and a field hospital to nurse them afterwards. The division is completed by the addition of a body of men called the "divisional troops." These consist of some cavalry, artillery, and engineers, with their own company of A.S.C. to feed them, and their own field hospital to nurse them. In addition, there is a "divisional ammunition column," formed of a number of wagons carrying spare ammunition for field-guns and rifles.

A force called the "corps troops" completes the army corps. These consist, as you may see, of cavalry, horse artillery, howitzers, and heavy field-guns. The latter are the famous 4·7-inch guns ("four-point-sevens") which were used so successfully for the first time in the Boer War. Then there is another infantry battalion thrown in, which brings the total number of battalions in the army corps up to twenty-five.

I have also shown four companies of cyclists as forming part of the corps troops, for they are very useful fighting men in a country where there are good roads, as you will see later. A large number of Royal Engineers, whose duties will be described in the second part of this book, belong to the corps troops.

You will notice that the corps troops have their own A.S.C. company to feed them, their own field hospital, and

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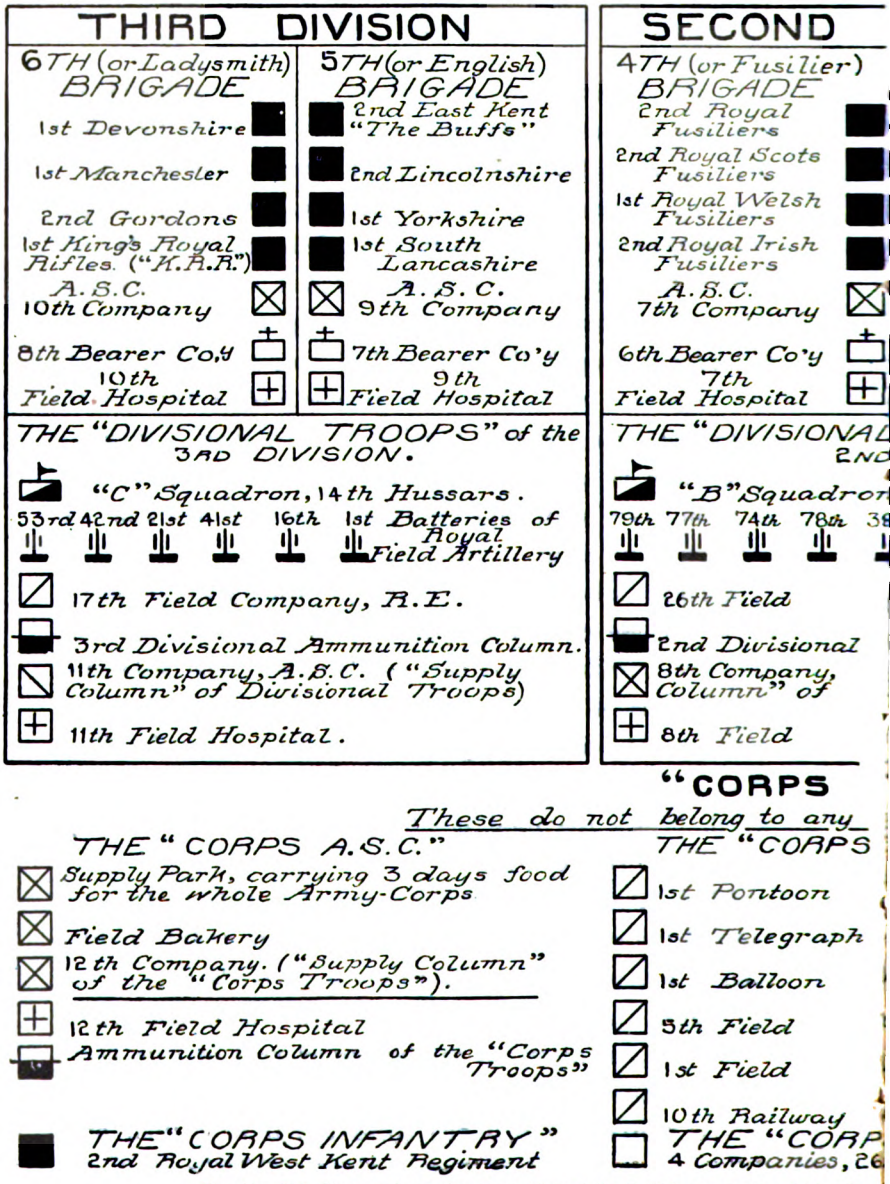

FIG. 20.—This diagram shows the composition of the British army corps which takes
shown among the "corps troops" do

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DIVISION

3RD (or Irish) BRIGADE

- 1st Inniskilling Fusiliers
- 2nd Royal Irish Rifles
- 1st Connaught Rangers
- 1st Royal Dublin Fusiliers
- A.S.C. 6th Company
- 3rd Bearer Co'y
- 6th Field Hospital

TROOPS" of the DIVISION.

- 4th Hussars.
- th Batteries of Royal Field Artillery
- Company, R.E.
- Ammunition Column.
- A.S.C. ("Supply Divisional Troops).
- Hospital.

FIRST DIVISION

2ND (or Highland) BRIGADE

- 2nd Black Watch
- 1st Highland Light Infantry
- 2nd Seaforth
- 1st Argyle and Sutherland
- A.S.C. 4th Company
- 4th Bearer Co'y
- 4th Field Hospital

1ST (or Guards) BRIGADE

- Grenadiers
- Coldstreams
- Scots
- Irish
- A.S.C. 3rd Company
- 3rd Bearer Co'y
- 3rd Field Hospital

THE "DIVISIONAL TROOPS" of the 1ST DIVISION.

- "A" Squadron, 14th Hussars.
- 73rd 64th 63rd 66th 14th 7th Batteries of Royal Field Artillery.
- 23rd Field Company, R.E.
- 1st Divisional Ammunition Column
- 5th Company, A.S.C. ("Supply Column" of Divisional Troops).
- 5th Field Hospital.

TROOPS"

rticular Brigade or Division

ENGINEERS"

- Troop
- Division.
- Section.
- Company.
- Park.
- Company.

CYCLISTS"
Middlesex (Volunteers)

THE "CORPS CAVALRY"

- 13th Hussars

THE "CORPS ARTILLERY"

- "P" "Q" Batteries of
- "Pom Pom" Royal Horse Artillery
- 65th 61st 37th Howitzer Batteries
- 100th 101st 102nd { Heavy Field Batteries (4·7 inch)
- The Ammunition Park of the 1st Army-Corps.

n the campaign in Belgium. The four companies of cyclists and the battery of pom-poms
isually form part of an army corps.

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their own ammunition column. They are finally completed by the "supply park" of the A.S.C.—a number of wagons carrying three days' food for the whole army corps, extra to the supply carried by the various companies of the A.S.C.—and an "ammunition park," containing a large amount of reserve ammunition.

Well, what do you think of the army corps? Has it got the right proportion of horsemen and footmen? No! There are not enough cavalrymen, you say. You are right. Two regiments of cavalry seem an absurdly small number of mounted troops for an army of over 36,000 men, considering that its safety depends on its horsemen.

So, if we take the field with a British army corps, we will add to it, shall we say, a cavalry division. This force, which is shown in *Fig. 21*, includes two battalions of mounted infantry of about 600 men each, and ought to be sufficient to secure us against surprise. It will also give us a good-sized body of mounted troops for suddenly attacking our enemy in some unexpected place, at a moment when he thinks that we are twenty or thirty miles away.

There is only one thing necessary now to complete our army—we must appoint a general as commander-in-chief, a lieutenant-general to command each division, and a major-general to each brigade. We must also give each general a staff of officers to assist him in his work. The commander-in-chief plans and orders the operations, the other generals arrange for the particular movements of

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their divisions and brigades, and the staffs work out all the small details, and communicate the orders of their several generals to all under their commands. These orders filter down through the whole army, until finally we find the colonels issuing them to their battalions, and

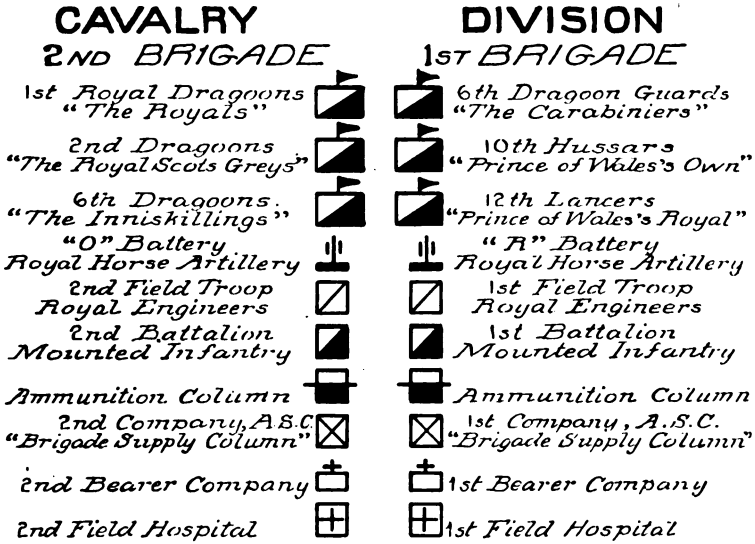
CAVALRY DIVISION
2ND BRIGADE
1ST BRIGADE
1st Royal Dragoons "The Royals"
6th Dragoon Guards "The Carabiniers"
2nd Dragoons "The Royal Scots Greys"
10th Hussars "Prince of Wales's Own"
6th Dragoons "The Inniskillings"
12th Lancers "Prince of Wales's Royal"
"O" Battery Royal Horse Artillery
"A" Battery Royal Horse Artillery
2nd Field Troop Royal Engineers
1st Field Troop Royal Engineers
2nd Battalion Mounted Infantry
1st Battalion Mounted Infantry
Ammunition Column
Ammunition Column
2nd Company, A.S.C. "Brigade Supply Column"
1st Company, A.S.C. "Brigade Supply Column"
2nd Bearer Company
1st Bearer Company
2nd Field Hospital
1st Field Hospital

FIG. 21.

This diagram shows the composition of the two cavalry brigades forming the cavalry division which, commanded by Lieutenant-General Douglas, accompanies the British army to Belgium, as narrated in the second part of this book.

the captains explaining them to the subalterns and men in their companies.

An army in the field is very like a man fighting with those good old British weapons, his fists.

The staff is his *brain*, which plans how to outwit his adversary, thinks of ways and means, and controls the movements of the rest of the body.

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The cavalry are his *eyes* and *ears*, with which he traces the enemy's movements.

The artillery is his *left* ***arm***, with which he can reach far and strike hard.

The mounted infantry is his *right arm*, which he can use to strike an unexpected blow, and with which he can quickly guard his body against sudden attacks.

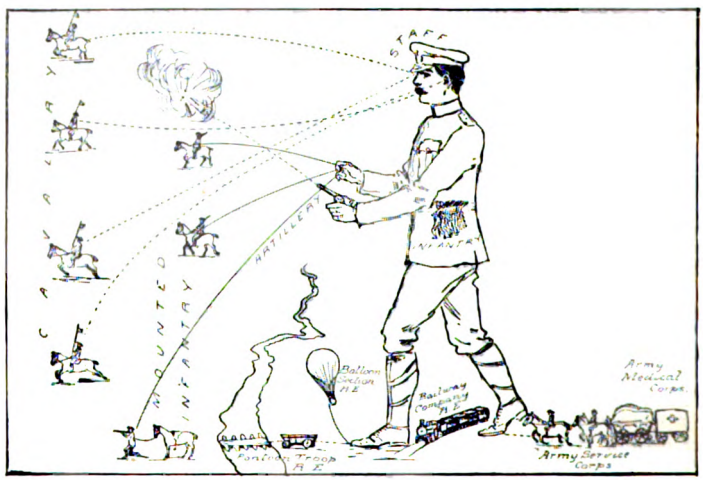

FIG. 21*a*.—COMPARISON BETWEEN AN ARMY AND A MAN.

The engineers and the army service corps are his *feet*, both necessary for keeping him moving forward.

The great mass of infantry is his *body*, in which lies all his power.

If brain, eyes, arms, or feet are injured, the man may yet live, though he is seriously crippled. But the collapse of the body from a very heavy blow paralyzes him for the time being.

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Part II.

CHAPTER I.

WAR IS DECLARED BETWEEN BRITAIN AND GERMANY.

IN the month of May, nearly thirty-five years after the great war between France and Germany in 1870, it is evident to the whole world that the two great military nations are again preparing to fight each other.

Eventually war is declared, and on the 15th of June over 350,000 German troops cross the boundary and invade France between Nancy and Belfort. (*See the little map in the corner of Map 1.*) To resist this invasion, French armies gather at Verdun, Nancy, Epinal, and Belfort. Two or three great battles are fought, in which neither side scores any distinct advantage. It is soon apparent, though, that the French forces are not strong enough to prevent the Germans from advancing, so reinforcements are hurried up by rail from all parts of the country.

What eventually happens is that nearly all the best trained troops in France are drawn towards Belfort. Then, suddenly, a German army of over 200,000 men

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crosses the frontier of Belgium at Cologne, and makes a dash for France along the railway line which runs through Namur, in order to cut across the rear of the French armies and advance on Paris.

This invasion is totally unexpected by the Belgians. True, they have been mobilizing their army ever since war was declared between France and Germany, just as they did in the war of 1870. Its war strength, however, is only about 165,000 men, and many of these are very poorly trained. Consequently, the Belgians make a very feeble resistance. In a few days the invaders are in possession of the whole of that part of Belgium which lies to the south of the railway running from Cologne to Maubeuge (*see Map 1*), with the exception of the towns of Liége, Huy, Namur, and Charleroi.

By this invasion, however, Germany has brought another enemy into the field. Neither the French nor German armies are allowed to march through Belgium. Many years ago—in 1831, to be exact—the five great nations of Europe, including Great Britain, agreed that Belgium was to be considered neutral ground. Any nation breaking this agreement would have to reckon with the others. In 1870 Bismarck wished to invade France by way of Belgium, but he was given to understand that Britain would not allow it, so he abandoned his scheme.

The invasion is made on the 1st of July. On the 28th of June the Emperor had asked Britain a question which practically amounted to, "What will you do if I invade France through Belgium?" The answer of the British

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Government was short and to the point: they intended to "stand by the agreement of 1831, and would regard any movement of Germany into Belgium as a hostile act."

Consequently, when the Germans cross the Belgian frontier at daybreak on the 1st of July, the telegraph wires from London flash the order to "mobilize" to the army and navy in all parts of the United Kingdom. Before midday every corner of the Empire knows that Britain and Germany are at war.

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CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST ARMY CORPS MOBILIZES.

"The Telegraph Wires from London flash the Order to Mobilize."

TO mobilize means to prepare an army for fighting by bringing it up to war strength in men and horses, and providing it with ammunition and stores.

This is a very important piece of work; for during peace time the different parts of an army are only kept at "peace strength," which is, as a rule, far below the strength at which it should embark for active service. A battery of field artillery, for example, requires from thirty to fifty additional men, and from eighty to one hundred horses, to bring it up to "war strength." Some parts of an army, in fact, do not exist at all in peace time, as, for instance, the "ammunition columns," which carry an army's spare ammunition.

In order to make mobilization as rapid as possible, and to prevent any hitch occurring, very careful plans are made in peace time. To show you how these plans are carried out, I will now describe the way in which one of the infantry battalions of the 1st Army Corps mobilizes.

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The method adopted differs slightly from that in which cavalry, artillery, and other branches of the army mobilize, but in its main points it is much the same.

I will take as an example the 2nd Lincoln Regiment, which means the 2nd Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment, the old 10th Foot. The battalion is stationed at Aldershot when war is declared against Germany.

It is the morning of this eventful 1st of July. The general commanding the 3rd Division, to which the Lincolns belong, has just come in from an early, before-breakfast ride, and is dismounting at his doorstep, when a telegram is handed to him containing the word "mobilize." In five minutes the general's telephone is hard at work, and orderlies are dashing out with official blue envelopes. The machinery for mobilizing the 3rd Division—carefully oiled and kept in order during peace time—has been set in motion.

The Lincolns have been out drilling on a broad stretch of green turf near their barracks, and are returning home. As the companies form up on the parade-ground, an orderly hands the colonel one of those blue envelopes which we have just seen leave the general's office.

One subaltern remarks to another, "The colonel's got a 'blue pill'"—this is the unofficial name for official documents in the army—"and looks awfully pleased over it. Wonder what it is?"

He soon knows. The battalion is to mobilize. The long-expected European war has come at last. He is going to "see service"!

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There is a big day's work before the colonel and his staff. The first thing to do is to telegraph to two of the officers who are on leave, and to several men on furlough, to rejoin at once. Then every one in the battalion is inspected by the medical officer, to see if he is fit for active service. When this is done, the colonel telegraphs to the War Office, stating the number of men he requires to bring the Lincolns up to war strength.

In peace time the full strength of a battalion is only 881 of all ranks, and this is generally reduced by sickness and other causes, so that from 230 to 250 men are required to bring it up to its war strength of 1,120 officers and men. These are made up of reservists—that is, men who have enlisted for twelve years, and after serving for seven with the battalion, have gone into the reserve for the remaining five.

An officer whose duty it is to pay these reservists keeps their addresses, and when he receives the order to mobilize, he sends each man a letter telling him where to go, a postal order for three shillings, and a "travelling warrant." This last is a printed piece of paper, by presenting which at a railway booking office a soldier obtains a free ticket. The railway company afterwards recovers the money from the Government.

On receipt of these documents, the reservists hasten to the regimental depôt of the Lincolns, which is at Lincoln. This regimental depôt is where all the recruits who enlist in the regiment are trained before they are sent to join the ranks as trained soldiers. For two or

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three days after mobilization is ordered, the reservists continue to arrive from all parts of the kingdom. As each man reports himself, the officer in command of the depôt has him medically inspected, and then gives him his arms, uniform, belts, etc.

As soon as about fifty men have been collected, they are sent from the depôt to the battalion at Aldershot. Here they go through some drill, and in a few days are as good soldiers as ever they were.

A dozen other things are going on while the reservists are coming in. Horses have to be obtained, as a battalion keeps only four in peace time, and wants thirty more to drag all the wagons which it takes with it on service. The way this is arranged for is as follows:—

The Government says to any person owning a horse: "Look here, we will give you ten shillings a year for every horse you have, if you will promise to bring those horses and sell them to us when war breaks out." A large number of people accept this offer; the prices are agreed on beforehand; and then, within forty-eight hours of receiving the order to do so, the owners are bound to deliver the horses at some convenient place within ten miles of their stables. If they fail to do so, they are fined £50 for each horse. This is what is known as "registering horses."

The colonel of the Lincolns sends a party of men to take over the horses from their owners. They are brought back and fitted with saddles and harness, which are kept ready in the battalion's "mobilization storehouse."

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While this is going on, nine wagons and a large amount of warlike stores are obtained from the Army Ordnance officer, who keeps them ready for issue. The baggage, store, and supply wagons of the battalion are then filled with their proper stores. By the time the last reservist joins, or the last horse is brought in, the other preparations are complete, and from five days to a week after the order for mobilization is given, the Lincolns are ready for service.

There are, however, certain parts of an army which require longer than a week to mobilize—for instance, the ammunition columns, ammunition park, field hospitals, bearer companies, etc. The wagons, harness, arms, and equipment of all these are kept ready in time of peace at the headquarters of the five British army corps, under the charge of a few men who look after them. On mobilization, all the horses and nearly the whole of the men have to be provided. The artillery takes charge of the ammunition columns, the Army Service Corps of the supply columns, and the Royal Army Medical Corps of the field hospitals and bearer companies.

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CHAPTER III.

PREPARATIONS FOR LANDING THE ARMY IN BELGIUM.

ON the day following the declaration of war, General French, commanding the 1st Army Corps, embarks with his staff on a fast cruiser for Ostend. Before leaving London, he has a long interview with the commander-in-chief and the Secretary of State for War. At this interview he is given the latest official news from Brussels. This is dated midday on the 2nd of July, and reports that the Germans have arrived opposite Liége. (*See Map 1.*) The Belgians, who are greatly outnumbered, have assembled chiefly at Louvain, Charleroi, Liége, and Namur. It is privately intimated, however, that no very serious resistance can be offered to the enemy at these places, except at Namur.

It is decided that the best place for the British army to disembark is Ostend. A glance at *Map 1* will show you why this route is chosen. By landing at Ostend, and along the coast on each side of it, the army has three lines of railway by which to advance, all leading straight through Brussels towards the enemy. If the army were to disembark at Antwerp, which at first sight seems the best place, owing to its numerous wharves

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and docks, it would first have to crawl up the mouth of the Schelde; then, as you will see from the map, the line by which it would afterwards have to advance from Antwerp to Brussels is exposed to an attack by the Germans from the east. They would, in fact, be in a good position for cutting the British "line of communications." So Antwerp, in spite of its docks and wharves, is not chosen as the landing-place. By disembarking at Blankenberghe, Ostend, and Nieuport Bains, which lie about ten miles apart, and by advancing simultaneously along the three separate lines which run to Brussels, the army will be able to assemble there in a third of the time which it would take if it landed at Ostend only. So these three places are chosen for landing the British force.

On General French's arrival at Ostend, he proceeds straight to Brussels, arriving there early in the morning of the 3rd of July, ten hours after leaving London. At nine o'clock he has an interview with the Belgian Minister of War, at which the following arrangements are made.

The three lines of railway from Blankenberghe, Ostend, and Nieuport are placed entirely at the disposal of the British. (These are shown on *Map 1.*) Sufficient trains for bringing the army up rapidly are to be assembled at all three places. The centre railway is selected as the British "line of communications," along which all the supplies and ammunition of the army will be forwarded direct from England. The Belgian War Minister promises to mass troops at Nivelles and Brussels for guarding this line. Lastly, the British commissariat department is au-

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thorized to draw supplies of food from the country west of Brussels.

On the 4th of July, the British India steamer *Virawa*, escorted by two second-class cruisers, arrives at Ostend with the general who is in command of the "line of communications," and a strong advanced party for making preparations for the disembarkation and the subsequent supply of the British army.

Work of the Advanced Party.

A railway company of the Royal Engineers takes charge of the railways which have been placed at the disposal of the British. The Belgian engine-drivers, guards, etc., are still employed; but the sappers superintend the general working of the line, draw up fresh time-tables, and make very careful preparations for sending on the army when it arrives with the least possible delay. As the engines and carriages sent by the Belgian Government arrive, they are made up into trains, which are numbered and made large enough to carry the different parts of the army corps. A battalion, for example, requires two trains, each of twenty-seven carriages, a squadron wants one, a field battery two, etc. Altogether a hundred and fifty trains have to be got ready for dispatching the army as quickly as they are filled when the troops disembark.

A great many preparations have to be made at Ostend, which is selected as the "base" from which the army is to be supplied, Blankenberghe and Nieuport being intended merely for hastening the landing of the troops.

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The Army Ordnance Corps takes a large number of sheds near the harbour station, and gets them ready for receiving the enormous quantity of stores which an army requires. These include spare rifles and guns; cartridges, shells, and all kinds of ammunition; spare wagons for replacing any that are lost or broken; boots, clothes, cooking utensils, and medicine—in fact, everything that an army wants, except food.

The Army Service Corps (the A.S.C.) prepares several warehouses in the docks for receiving food supplies from England. As most of the food, however, is to be obtained from the country, a company of the A.S.C. goes to Ghent, where it makes an enormous "supply depôt" in some large buildings just outside the town and near the railway. Contracts are made with farmers and other people for sending in food to this depôt, and by the time the army lands in Belgium enough flour, cattle, sheep, and hay have been collected to feed the troops for a week. Further arrangements are made for keeping the depôt constantly supplied with all these things, and also with fresh vegetables, so that the A.S.C. can forward them to the army by rail.

The officers of the Army Service Corps have another duty to perform, and that is to collect wagons for the "supply park" and "field bakery" of the army corps. The officers, men, and horses of both these branches of the army are provided by the A.S.C., but over three hundred and fifty wagons have to be obtained from the country for transporting the three days' supply of food which they

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carry for the army corps. This is not a difficult matter in a well-populated country like Belgium, and by the time the army disembarks the wagons have been collected and placed by a railway siding about ten miles west of Brussels, where they await the arrival of the horses.

The Royal Army Medical Corps prepares a large hospital at Ostend, and smaller ones at Bruges, Ghent, Alost, and Brussels. (*Map 1.*)

The Army Veterinary Department establishes a large "horse hospital" at Ostend, and the Remount Department makes depôts at Ostend and Ghent. Horses are bought from the farmers and others, and a large number are soon ready for replacing those killed, wounded, and sick in the army. This is a very necessary precaution, for in a couple of weeks of warfare nearly half the horses of an army are disabled in some way or other.

The Army Pay Department (A.P.D.) establishes offices at Ostend and Ghent, where paymasters are stationed with money to pay the troops, and also the country people for horses, food, wagons, and forage.

Finally, large houses at Ostend are converted into barracks for the men whom all batteries, battalions, squadrons, and companies leave behind when they take the field. For example, a battalion always leaves an officer and over a hundred men at the base. These are sent up afterwards to replace casualties, and in the meantime make themselves useful in helping in the landing of stores. They also look after, and send forward, drafts arriving from home for the regiment.

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CHAPTER IV.

EMBARKATION OF THE BRITISH ARMY.

WHILE the 1st Army Corps and the Cavalry Division are being mobilized, the Admiralty is hard at work collecting merchant steamers in the Thames for transporting them to Belgium.

Vessels are quickly hired from the various great shipping firms, and workmen pour on board to fit them out for carrying the troops. The voyage will be so short—twelve hours at the most—that elaborate preparations for the men need not be made. The horses, however, must be securely stabled in case of rough weather. Enough material for making temporary stalls for nearly 20,000 horses is kept stored at Woolwich in time of peace; some of this is soon got out and set up in those steamers which are not already fitted for carrying animals. Several cattle-boats are hired, and as these are practically ready, the work of preparing a sufficient number of ships to transport the horses of the army is made easier.

For such a short journey, each ship is able to carry a far greater number of men and horses than if the army was going, say, to Cape Town. For instance, the P. and

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O. steamer *Simla*, 5,884 tons, could easily carry two battalions of infantry to Ostend, including all their wagons and horses, and several days' supply of food and forage. To Cape Town she could only carry one battalion, on account of the men requiring more room for such a long trip and also a month's food.

From the 8th until the 11th of July the London docks present a scene of the greatest bustle and confusion. Battalions, batteries, squadrons, companies of engineers, field hospitals, bearer companies, army service corps companies, ammunition columns, arrive every hour. Train after train disgorges masses of drab-clad men on the platforms. The roads leading to the docks are packed with long columns of guns, wagons, and horsemen.

As fast as a ship is filled, she casts off from the wharf, and another moves in to take her place. Steam cranes whir and rattle and swing tons of freight into the holds; horses are kicking, stamping, and neighing as they cross the numerous gangways leading to their temporary stables; long lines of men on the wharves break up into strings and file on to the decks, each man carrying his kit-bag over his shoulder.

The filled transports steam down the Thames to below Tilbury, and form into three fleets, "A," "B," and "C."

"A" fleet consists of 30 big steamers altogether, 15 of which carry the cavalry division, 6 the batteries of the corps artillery and the ammunition park, and 9 the troops of the 2nd Division. Its destination is Ostend, where it is easier to land guns and horses than

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at either of the other two places where the army is to disembark.

"B" fleet carries the 3rd Division in 9 ships, and the corps cavalry, infantry, and supply parks in 5—altogether 14 ships. These are bound for Blankenberghe.

"C" fleet carries the 1st Division in 9 ships, and the remainder of the corps troops in 7. These 16 ships will land their troops at Nieuport Bains.

The order to mobilize, you will remember, was given on the 1st July at 8 a.m. By the time darkness sets in on the 11th, the whole of the 1st Army Corps and the Cavalry Division have embarked, and the transport fleet is lying below Tilbury with steam up, stretching down the river for several miles.

The time taken to mobilize and embark the same sized force for South Africa at the end of 1899 has thus been beaten. On that occasion, mobilization was begun on the 9th October; 21,000 troops were embarked by the 23rd, but the last transport did not leave England until November the 9th.

The 12th of July dawns with a slight mist hanging over the low flat shores to the north of the Thames. To the south the Kentish hills look cold and gray in the morning light. At 2 a.m. bang! goes a gun from the smart little cruiser at the head of the fleet. In an instant the whole river is alive with the "clunk-clunk-clunk" of chains and the noise of escaping steam as the great fleet weighs anchor

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In a few minutes the long string of ships is steaming slowly down the river, the cruiser leading the way. Half a dozen torpedo boats glide noiselessly through the fleet, whipping up a laggard here and there, and generally reminding one of shepherds' dogs in charge of a big flock of sheep.

Despite the early hour, an enormous crowd of boats of all sorts and descriptions has come laden with passengers to cheer the army on its way. The first rays of the sun glance up the river towards four o'clock, and reveal an exciting scene. Sixty stately transports, some of them the finest ships of such great lines as the P. and O., the Cunard, White Star, Orient, and British India, their decks crowded with masses of soldiers, steam majestically through a perfect sea of small craft, packed with men and gaily-dressed women. Bands are playing from the excursion steamers and river steamboats, and the strains of "Tommy Atkins," "Auld Lang Syne," and "The Girl I left behind me," mingle with the sound of continual cheering.

At the Nore a strong naval squadron is lying waiting to convoy the army across the North Sea. Out on the horizon can be seen several cruisers looking out for signs of the enemy's ships. There is not much fear, however, of any turning up, for the North Sea is swept from end to end by French and British squadrons.

As the ships pass Southend, two guns in rapid succession from the flag-ship warn the accompanying mass of pleasure boats to turn back. Noise of cheering rends

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the air, handkerchiefs wave a last farewell, and the big transports slowly forge ahead of the small craft.

At this moment a graceful-looking yacht, with raking funnels and long slender masts, darts out from Sheerness, steams rapidly round the Nore Lightship, and bears down on the approaching transports. As she passes the British squadron, the sides of the men-of-war break into a flame, and the muffled sound of guns firing blank cartridges rolls over the water.

The yacht slackens speed and passes along the line of transports. As she goes by each ship she is greeted with a mighty burst of cheering, ensigns dip, and helmets wave frantically in the air.

The Royal Standard floats from the yacht's masthead over two persons standing on her bridge, one in the brilliant scarlet uniform of a British field-marshal, the other a slender willowy figure in a graceful clinging black dress.

They are the King and Queen—God bless them!—come to wish their army Godspeed!

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CHAPTER V

THE GENERAL STATE OF AFFAIRS WHEN THE BRITISH ARMY LANDS IN BELGIUM.

WE will now glance at the events which have occurred since the German invasion of Belgium on the 1st of July, and the disembarkation of the British army at Ostend and the neighbouring ports on the afternoon of the 12th.

Briefly stated, the object of the Germans was to seize the railway (*see Map 1*) running from Aix-la-Chapelle to Namur, and thence branching off to Maubeuge and Givet. They would then invade France at one or both of these places, and have a convenient line of rails for bringing up their supplies.

Consequently, on the 1st of July, they advanced rapidly towards Namur, 200,000 strong. As they passed Liège, which was garrisoned by about 15,000 Belgians, they detached their 5th and 6th Army Corps (altogether about 70,000 men) to attack the place, and the remainder pushed on to Huy. A small Belgian force there retired precipitately to Namur, and swelled the garrison of that fortress to 30,000 men.

The Germans left 10,000 men at Huy to guard the

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railway, and continued their advance on Namur, which is fairly strongly fortified. They reached it on the 5th, and at once surrounded and laid siege to it with their 1st and 2nd Army Corps, as shown on *Map 1*, where each coloured block represents about 10,000 men. A large force of cavalry was stationed a few miles to the north to watch the country towards Brussels. The 3rd Army Corps was sent towards Charleroi, to prevent the Belgian army there from interfering with the siege. The 4th Army Corps advanced to Dinant, to watch the French frontier.

On the 9th of July, Liège was taken by a night assault, the whole of the Belgian garrison was captured, and a fresh division of infantry (about 12,000 men) was sent from Germany to occupy the place. This set free the 5th and 6th Army Corps, which at once advanced along the railway from Huy to Ciney, and from that town along a temporary line eight miles long, constructed by the Engineer Corps, to Dinant. (*See Map 1.*) They crossed the boundary at Givet on the 15th of July, drawing towards them strong forces from Paris and the north of France. Subsequently reinforced from Germany, they fought several battles between Sedan and Maubeuge. We will not, however, follow the career of these two army corps, but will devote ourselves to the actions fought between the remainder of the German forces in Belgium and the united British and Belgian armies.

On the fall of Liége, Lord Kitchener is appointed commander-in-chief of the allied forces, by the special request

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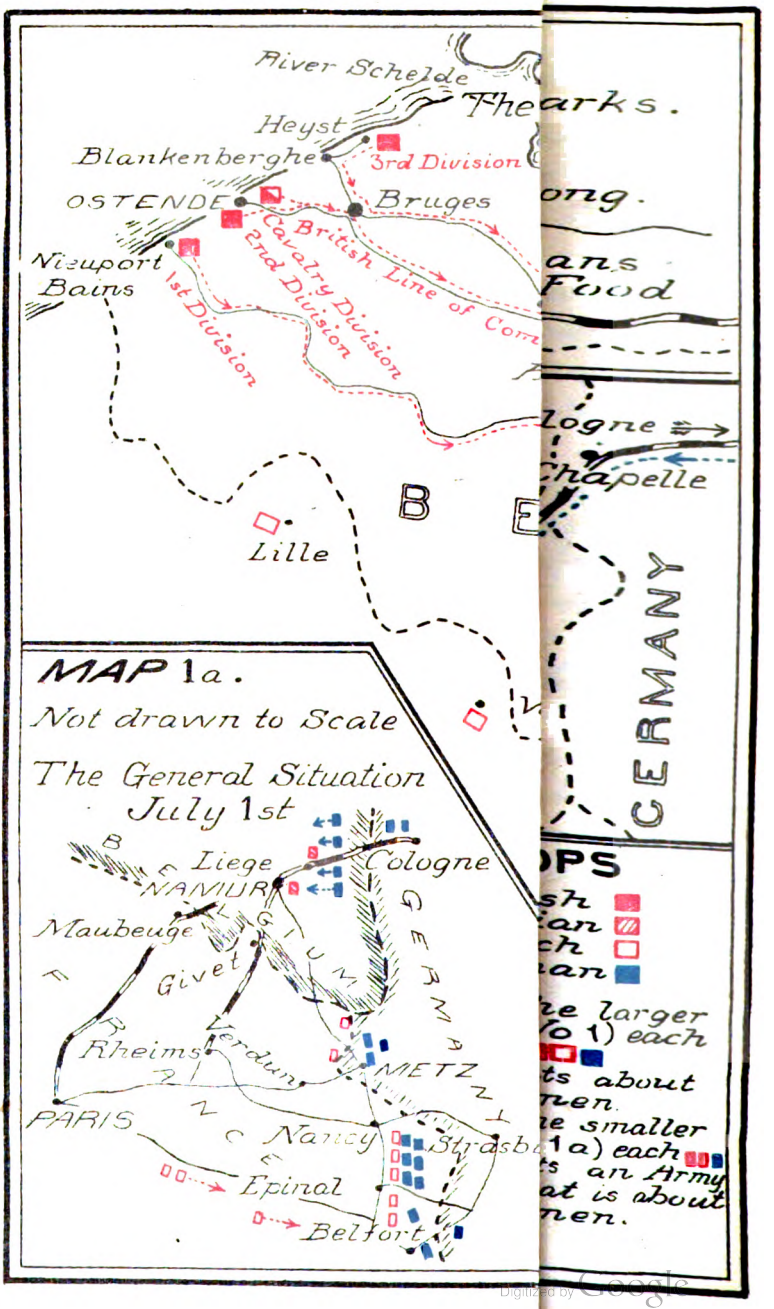

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of the King of the Belgians and his Government. He arrives in Brussels on the 12th of July, and while the British army is disembarking and gradually assembling at the Belgian capital, he draws up his plan of campaign.

Lord Kitchener's intention, stated briefly, is to advance on Namur on the 16th of July with all the British troops from Brussels. Ten thousand Belgian troops at Nivelles are to join the British as they pass Genappe (*see Map 2*), bringing the total strength of the allied forces to over 50,000 men, of whom General French is given the command.

As the distance from Brussels to Namur is roughly thirty miles, General French will reach the neighbourhood of the latter place in the afternoon of the 18th, on which day the right of his army will effect a junction at Fleurus (*Map 2*) with the left wing of the Belgian army at Charleroi. The combined armies will then amount to 90,000 men. With these, General French is to attack the Germans besieging Namur from the north and west, and at the same moment 20,000 men of the Namur garrison are to make a vigorous sortie.

While General French is thus keeping the Germans around Namur busy, Lord Kitchener will send a Belgian army of 40,000 men from Louvain to advance rapidly on Huy, and seize the railway between that place and Liège. (*See Map 1.*)

In this way Lord Kitchener hopes to raise the siege of Namur, and to cut the invading army's line of communications, thus preventing it from receiving supplies from Germany.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE BRITISH ARMY IS ORDERED TO ADVANCE.

(In this chapter the reader imagines himself in General French's place, and writes orders for the advance of the British army.)

BY midday on the 16th of July the last man of the British army corps has arrived in camp on the southern outskirts of Brussels, and final preparations are being made for a forward move. The cavalry division, which arrived on the night of the 13th, is in bivouac at Waterloo, about seven miles south of the Belgian capital, and is patrolling the country in the neighbourhood of the famous battlefield, guarding the army from the prying eyes of any German scouts who may have penetrated so far north.

During the morning of the 15th, Lord Kitchener informs General French of his scheme for attacking the Germans, which you read about in the last chapter. He places him in command of all the British troops, and orders him to march from Brussels at sunrise on the 16th.

General French returns to his headquarters, and for the next two hours his staff is busy writing orders telling the British army what to do on the following day.

Fig. 20 will help you to understand the way in which

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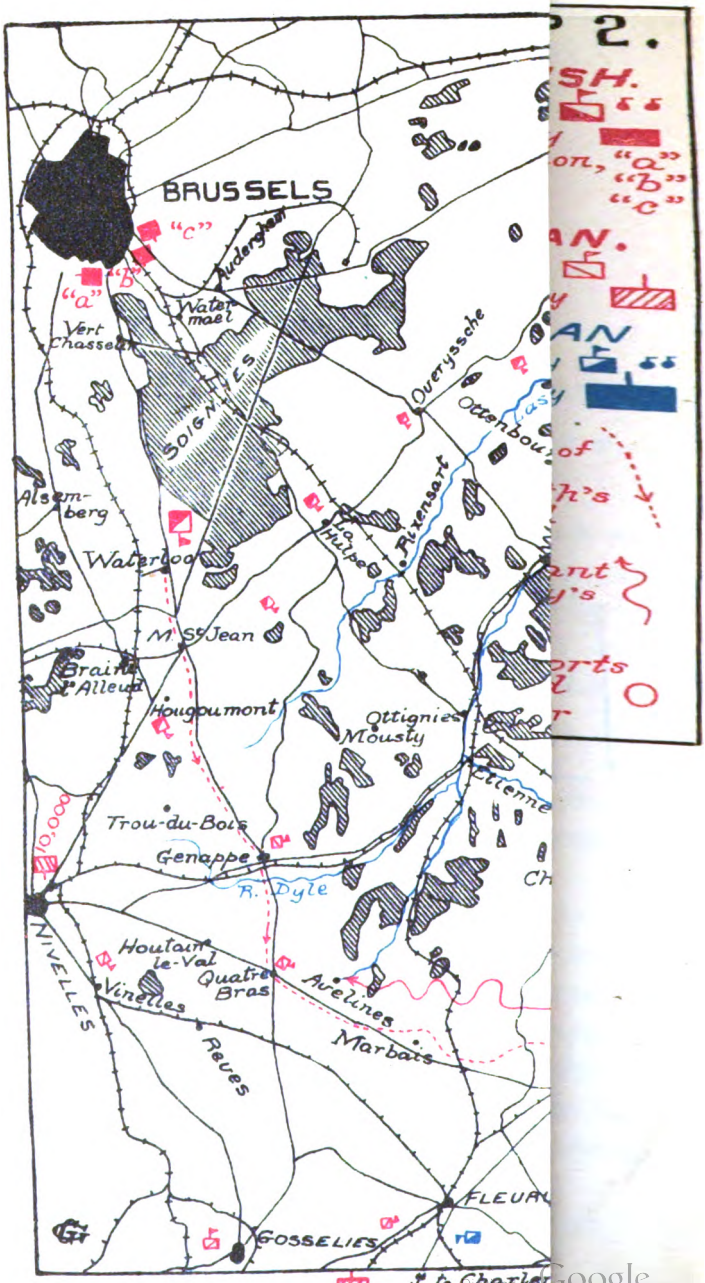
BRUSSELS
"c"
"b"
"a"
Vert Chasseur
Waterloo
Alsemberg
Braine l'Alleud
Hougoumont
M.t St Jean
Trou-du-Bois
Genappe
R. Dyle
Houtain le-Val
Quatre Bras
Vinelles
Reves
Marbais
Avelines
Ottignies
Mousty
Overyssche
Ruysbroeck
Ohain
Ixelles
Forest
Uccle
Dieweghem
Watermael
Audergher
Nivelles
Gosselies
FLEURU
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these orders are distributed throughout the army until they reach every officer and man in it. For example:—(1) When the lieutenant-general of the 1st Division receives General French's order, he writes "Division Orders," and sends a copy to each of the two major-generals commanding respectively the 1st and 2nd Brigades, and to the officers commanding the cavalry, artillery, engineers, Army Service Corps, and Army Medical Corps of his "divisional troops;" (2) each major-general then writes "Brigade Orders," and sends a copy to each of the seven officers who command respectively the four battalions, the Army Service Corps, and the bearer company and the field hospital of his brigade.

At first sight it may appear to you as if a great deal of writing and time would be saved if General French wrote one set of orders telling every one what to do. This would, however, necessitate his going into a very large number of small details, which would keep him so busy that he would not have time to think out his plans for attacking the enemy. So he merely tells the generals under him what he intends doing, gives them an idea of where the enemy is, fixes an hour for starting the march, and leaves them to make all other arrangements.

A great deal depends upon the way in which orders are written, especially in modern warfare, where armies fight battles scattered over such a great extent of country that generals and colonels are often separated from the officers and men under their command for several hours. Hence, orders must be very clear, so that the whole army will

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understand the plan of the man who gives them, and will, when the time arrives, act with one common object in view.

An army, in fact, tries to *work together* in a battle or a large manœuvre in much the same way as a football team *plays together* in a match; and you need scarcely be told what an important thing that is if you want to win. The army *fights* for the good of its country as the team *plays* for the honour of its school. Regiments *assist* each other as players do when they *shove together* or *pass the ball* from one to another; exceptionally gallant *charges* and heroic *defences* correspond to brilliant *runs* and fine *tackling*. All work with one common impulse, given to the army by its general, to the team by its captain.

"Orders," then, being of such great importance in warfare, it will be worth your while for once to see how they are written. The present opportunity is a good one. Put yourself in General French's place, open *Map 2*, and look at the positions of the British, Belgian, and German armies; then send for Colonel Trent, your chief staff-officer, and dictate to him orders for the advance of your army of 40,000 men.

To begin with, you must give your army three pieces of information:—(*a*) Where the enemy is, and how many men he has. (You ascertain this from your intelligence officers, who, for the past ten days, have been busy finding out the positions and numbers of the German forces from their scouts and spies, and from the inhabitants of the country.) (*b*) Where the Belgian armies are. (*c*) The

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positions of rivers near your proposed line of march, stating the places where they may be crossed.

You then write your first order as follows:—

ORDERS BY GENERAL FRENCH,

Commanding the British Army in Belgium.

CORPS HEADQUARTERS,
BRUSSELS,
July 15th, 19—, 2 p.m.

No. 1.—(*a*) *Information about the enemy.*

A German army about 60,000 strong is besieging NAMUR.

A second German army about 30,000 strong is between NAMUR and CHARLEROI.

A third German army about 40,000 strong was yesterday five miles south of NAMUR.

A German force is guarding the enemy's line of communications at LIEGE and HUY: strength unknown.

The enemy's cavalry patrols were reported this morning to be near FLEURUS, DOCQ, GEMBLOUX, PERWEZ, ST. ANDRE, and JAUCHE. His scouts have been seen near the DYLE RIVER.

(*b*) *Information about our own troops.*

A Belgian army is at LOUVAIN. Its cavalry patrols are at ARCHENNES, JODOIGNE, TIRLEMONT.

A Belgian force is at NIVELLES. Its cavalry patrols are at GENAPPE, QUATRE BRAS, and VINELLES.

A Belgian army is at CHARLEROI. Its cavalry patrols are near GOSSELIES and FLEURUS.

A Belgian army is besieged in NAMUR.

(*c*) *Nature of the country.*

The RIVER LASNE is fordable at any point.

The DYLE is unfordable below ETIENNE, but numerous bridges exist.

The enemy has cut all the telegraph lines south and east of the road TIRLEMONT–FLEURUS.

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You then tell your army what you mean to do; but you do not say too much, for if you fail through some cause or other to carry out all your intentions, the confidence of your men in you will be lessened.

No. 2.—Intentions of the G.O.C.

The British army will advance to-morrow towards NAMUR.

Next, you make arrangements for finding out what the Germans are doing, and for preventing them from finding out what you are doing.

To do this you resolve to send your cavalry division about ten or fifteen miles ahead of your army corps. Each of your two cavalry brigades can stretch out over a front of nearly twelve miles, so that, if you choose, you can march your infantry and artillery behind a line of cavalry twenty-four miles long. This line is what is called a "cavalry screen." It prevents the enemy's scouts from approaching near enough to see what your army is doing, and at the same time sends out its own scouts to ascertain the enemy's movements.

So you write the following order for the special benefit of Lieutenant-General Douglas, who commands the cavalry division, and for the general information of the rest of the army:—

No. 3.—Order for the Cavalry.

(*a*) *Place of march.*

The Cavalry Division will form a screen to cover the advance of the army.

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(*b*) *Hour of start.*

The Division will be clear of the BRAINE L'ALLEUD–LOUVAIN road by 6.30 a.m. to-morrow.

(*c*) *Direction of march.*

The right of the screen will advance along the road from BRAINE L'ALLEUD through NIVELLES to VINELLES, thence along the railway VINELLES to FLEURUS; the left of the screen along a line joining OVERYSSCHE to ARCHENNES, thence along the road GREZ-DOICEAU to JODOIGNE.

(*d*) *General task of the Cavalry.*

To thoroughly reconnoitre the country towards NAMUR, and find out the positions and strength of the enemy's forces. Every effort should be made by questioning prisoners and the people of the country to obtain information about the enemy's movements.

To prevent the march of the army from being delayed by at once driving back any small parties of the enemy. Lieutenant-General Douglas will do what he thinks best should he encounter the enemy in large bodies.

(*e*) *Special patrols.*

Several "officer's patrols" will be sent out ahead of the screen, to approach as near NAMUR as possible, to ascertain the strength of the enemy south and west of that place.

(*f*) *Special task for the Cavalry.*

An endeavour to destroy one or more bridges on the LIEGE–NAMUR railway will be made by the Field Troops, R.E.

(*g*) *Communications.*

Lieut.-General Douglas will take steps to keep up communication between all parts of the screen. He will telegraph reports of his movements to General French at LA HULPE post-office every half-hour, and at once on meeting the enemy. Copies will also be sent by cyclists.

Having thus arranged for your cavalry division—the "eyes and ears" of your army—you next tell your army

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corps what to do. The fighting part alone will stretch along one road for nearly thirteen miles, while all its baggage, hospital, food, and ammunition wagons will add another seventeen miles to its length—altogether thirty miles! This is an inconveniently great distance, for it means that your last man will be two days' march behind your leading man, reckoning fifteen miles as a day's march. So, as there are three roads running almost parallel to each other from Brussels towards Namur, you order an infantry division to march by each. In order, however, to prevent one division getting ahead of the others, you select three places in a line which each must pass at a certain hour, and also fix the time at which they must cross the Mont St. Jean to Overyssche road, reckoning that they will march two miles an hour. This is not very fast, but it is quite quick enough for the first day's journey.

No. 4.—Order for the 1st Army Corps.

(*a*) The 1st Infantry Division will march by the BRUSSELS–MONT ST. JEAN–GENAPPE road. The head of its vanguard will pass the VERT CHASSEUR INN at 6 a.m., and MONT ST. JEAN crossroads at 9.52 a.m.

The 2nd Infantry Division by the BRUSSELS–LA HULPE–OTTIGNIES road. The head of its vanguard will pass the railway station at WATERMAEL at 6 a.m., and LA HULPE crossroads at 9.7 a.m.

The 3rd Infantry Division, by the BRUSSELS–OVERYSSCHE–WAVRE road. The head of its vanguard will pass AUDERGHEM crossroads at 6 a.m., and OVERYSSCHE crossroads at 8.52 a.m.

(*b*) The division generals will keep in constant communication with each other by means of signallers and cyclists.

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*No. 5.—Order for the Corps Troops.**

(*a*) *Corps Cavalry.*—The 13th Hussars will join Lieut.-General Douglas at WATERLOO this evening.

(*b*) *Corps Artillery.*—The Howitzer and Heavy Field Batteries will march behind the 3rd Division. P and Q Batteries and the 1st Pom-Poms, R.H.A., will join Lieut.-General Douglas at WATERLOO this evening.

(*c*) *Corps Engineers.*—The Royal Engineers will march behind the 2nd Division. The Officer commanding the 1st Telegraph Division will send a section to maintain telegraphic communication between the cavalry screen and LA HULPE. The 10th Railway Company will take charge of the BRUSSELS–LA HULPE railway, and will work all trains so as to keep up a continuous and rapid supply of food, ammunition, and stores to the army from BRUSSELS.

(*d*) *Corps Infantry.*—The 2nd Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment, will furnish escorts to the "trains."

(*e*) *Corps Cyclists.*—One company will be attached to each infantry division.

No. 6.—Order for the Train.†

(*a*) The train of each division will follow one mile behind the rearguard in the following order :—

Ammunition Columns.
Field Hospitals.
(Interval of three miles.)
Supply Train.
(Interval of three miles.)
Baggage.

(*b*) The train of the Corps Troops will follow the 2nd Division.‡

(*c*) The Supply Park § and Field Bakery § will remain at Brussels until further orders.

(*d*) The Ammunition Park § will be at MONT ST. JEAN at 6 p.m. to-morrow.

* The cavalry, artillery, engineers, etc., not belonging to the divisions. (*See Fig. 20*, pp. 66, 67.)

† The "train" is the column of wagons carrying ammunition, hospital necessaries, food, etc. (*See Fig. 27*, p. 190.)

‡ Similar to the train of a division.

§ See *Fig. 20*.

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No. 7.—Position of the General Officer commanding the Army.

General French will leave the Corps Headquarters at 7 a.m., and will march at the head of the main body of the 2nd Division. The Corps Headquarters will be ready to leave BRUSSELS for LA HULPE by special train at any moment after midday to-morrow.

(By order) A. TRENT, Colonel,
Chief Staff-Officer.

Having finished writing the foregoing orders to your dictation, Colonel Trent sends them by a staff officer to the R.E. Park.* The sapper sergeant in the printing wagon there quickly puts them in type, and prints as many copies as are wanted. The type is then taken to pieces again, Colonel Trent checks and signs the copies, and sends one to each general of a division, and to the officers commanding batteries and companies in the corps troops.

By thus putting yourself in General French's place for a brief space of time, you have obtained a clear idea of what the British army is going to do to-morrow, the 16th July.

In the next chapter you will read a description of how a cavalry division forms a "screen." You will then accompany it, see how it fares while reconnoitring the country, and, finally, how it finds the enemy's cavalry-men, and engages them in a fierce struggle, while the army corps behind advances undisturbed along the roads from Brussels to the river Dyle.

* See *Fig. 20*, pp. 66, 67.

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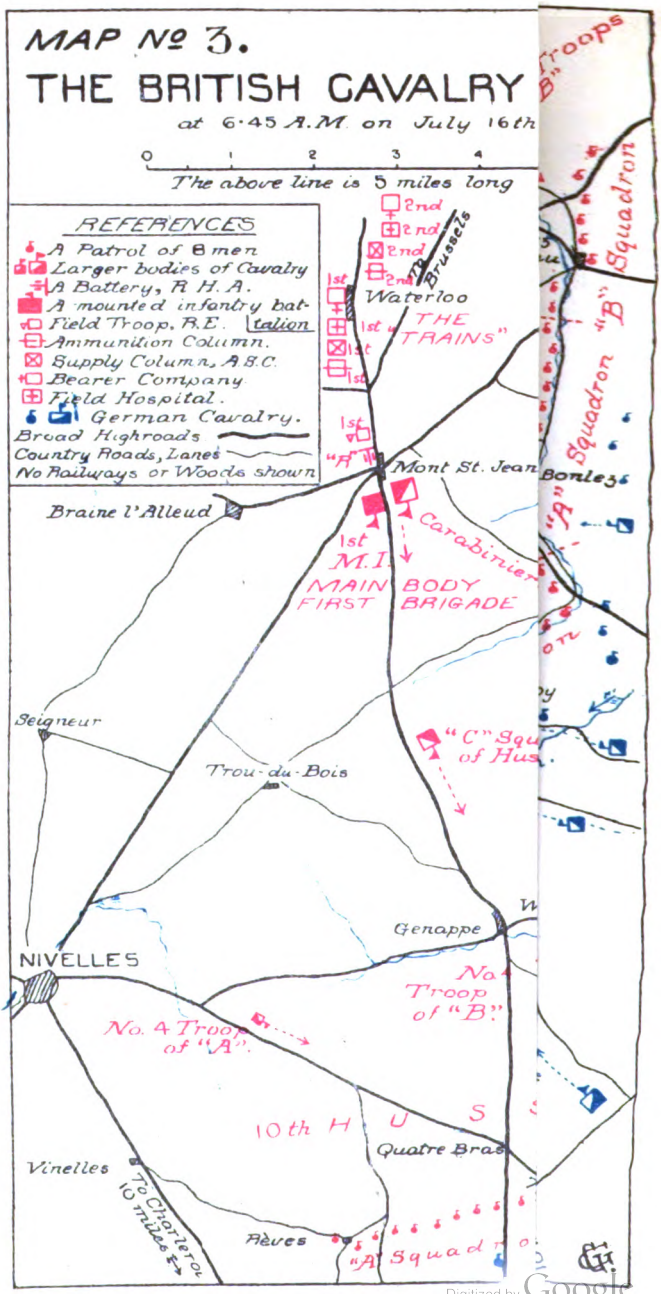

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CHAPTER VII.

THE BRITISH CAVALRY SCREEN ENCOUNTERS THE ENEMY.

(This chapter describes how the British Cavalry Division forms a screen of scouts to prevent the Germans from surprising the 1st Army Corps while it is marching from Brussels. *Map 3* is the best one to refer to when you want to find any place that is mentioned. If you have forgotten how a cavalry regiment is made up of troops and squadrons, look at *Figs. 5, 6,* and *7.*)

GENERAL DOUGLAS'S men are up and stirring very early on the morning of July the 16th. Horses are watered, breakfasts eaten, and by 4.15 a.m. both cavalry brigades are stretched along the road between Braine l'Alleud and Overyssche. The "cavalry screen" is ready to start.

There are several ways of making a cavalry screen: that adopted by General Douglas is somewhat as follows.

He divides part of his force into a large number of small parties called "patrols," each consisting of seven or eight horsemen. These patrols sweep over the country in a long line and search for the enemy. Some miles behind them come several larger bodies of cavalry, ready to trot or gallop to any place where the patrols may encounter their opponents.

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Take, for instance, the 1st Royal Dragoons — the "Royals," as they are called — who form the left of

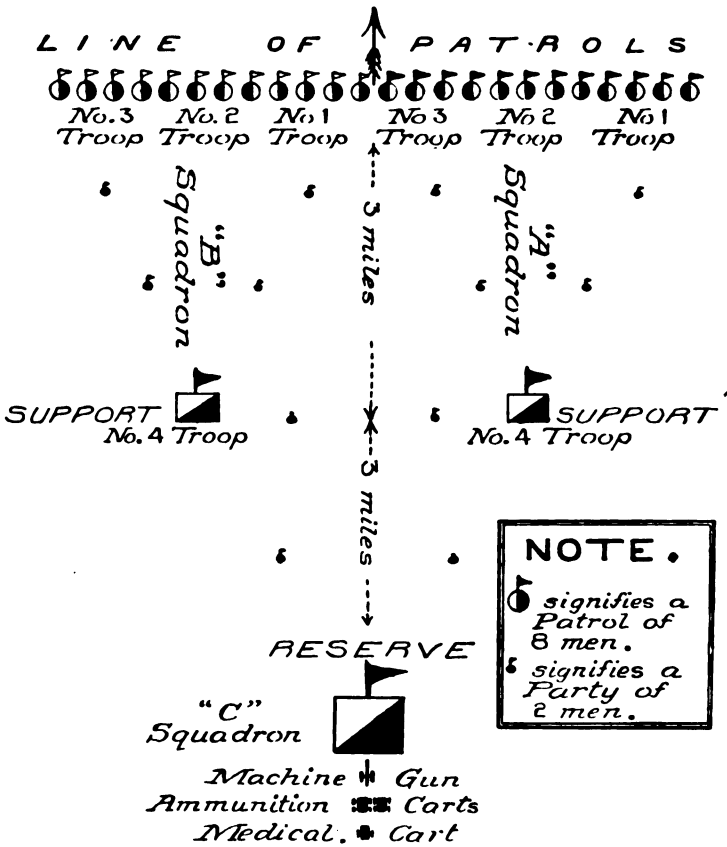

FIG. 22.—HOW THE "ROYALS" FORM A CAVALRY SCREEN.

General Douglas's line. (*See Fig. 22.*) A and B Squadrons each forms three of its troops into patrols, keeping its fourth troop behind as a "support." C Squadron is

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placed as a "reserve" behind the supports, ready to come to their help if they are not strong enough to drive back any enemy whom the patrols may encounter.

In a fairly open country like Belgium, a patrol of eight men can thoroughly search the ground for about one-eighth of a mile on each side of it as it advances, so that a troop, which is strong enough to make four patrols, can cover one mile of front. The line of Royals' patrols, therefore, as arranged in *Fig. 22*, is about six miles in length.

By 4.30 the sun has dispersed the slight night mist hanging over the country, and the signal is given for the screen to start.

Map 3, which gives its position two hours afterwards, shows you how the advance is conducted.*

First come the patrols in a line over twenty miles long, trotting along roads and lanes and over fields, searching farmhouses, woods, and villages as they advance.

About three miles behind them come the support troops, moving along highways and byways, and keeping a watchful eye on the patrol by means of detached troopers. Behind these again, the reserve squadrons advance by separate roads.

The rest of the cavalry division, and also the regiment and batteries which General French sent last night to reinforce it, are divided into three forces. These are called "main bodies," and move along the three chief roads about ten miles in rear of the patrol line.

* Compare this map with *Fig. 21*, page 69, and see what has become of all the regiments, batteries, etc., which are shown in the latter.

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You will notice from the map that the two brigades have been kept quite distinct—the first on the right, and the second on the left. Each is under the orders of its own brigadier-general, who is responsible to General Douglas for the thorough examination of the country passed over by the regiments of his brigade. You will also notice that the long train of wagons carrying the food, reserve ammunition, and hospitals, have been left at Waterloo. They would only be in the way while the cavalry division is manœuvring; and, if a battle is fought, they can be quickly summoned by cyclists or mounted orderlies to the scene of action.

During the advance, all parts of the screen—namely, the patrols, support troops, reserve squadrons, and main bodies—keep in constant communication with each other by means of signallers and cyclists. (*N.B.*—The "patrols of two men" shown in *Fig. 22.*) Thus, at any moment, any part can be quickly called to the assistance of any other part.

As the patrols have to make certain that none of the enemy's scouts pass between them, they are more or less tied down to their places in the line. In order, therefore, to get early news of the enemy, several "special patrols," generally consisting of an officer and from five to twenty men, are sent many miles ahead of the screen. Each is ordered to act quite independently of the rest of the cavalry division, to find out where the enemy is as soon as possible, and to keep him in sight while one or two messengers are dispatched with the news to the general.

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Single scouts are also sent on this duty, which is a dangerous one to perform well, for the "special patrols" have often to penetrate fifty or sixty miles into the enemy's country, and are liable to be cut off and captured.

Let us follow one of the Scots Greys' patrols and see how it does its work.

It is moving along a footpath over some fields. First comes a "point" of two men, forming a sort of advanced guard to prevent the enemy from surprising the patrol. About a hundred yards behind them are the corporal in command of the patrol and four of his men—the "main body" of the patrol. The eighth trooper follows, near enough to keep his eye on his comrades, and yet sufficiently far behind to have a chance of escaping should they be suddenly set on by the enemy.

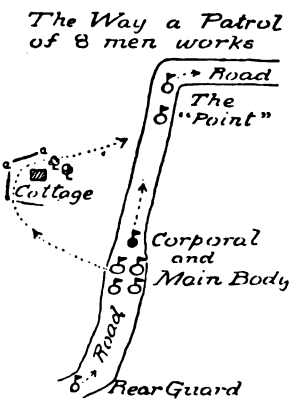

FIG. 23.

Scouts from this little main body are constantly sent out two hundred or three hundred yards to each side to search a garden, cottage, copse, or a hollow in the ground unseen from the footpath. Also, at regular intervals, troopers ride out to meet men from the next patrols, a quarter of a mile away on each side. By thus communicating with each other, the patrols are enabled to keep their proper places in the line.

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After a while, our patrol enters a sunken lane which runs in the direction of its advance. Whenever it approaches a turn in this lane, one of the troopers in the "point" rides forward, looks cautiously round the corner, and seeing no enemy, signals "All clear" with a wave of his arm. He then moves on, and the remainder of the patrol follow. (*See Fig. 23.*)

A little later, the patrol draws near some farm buildings

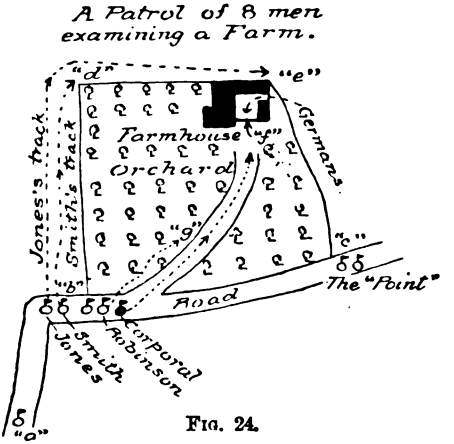

FIG. 24.

in a small wood. (*See Fig. 24.*) The main body halts at "*b*." The "point" trots on to "*c*," and stops. Trooper Jones from the main body rides round the outside of the wood, followed by Trooper Smith, fifty yards or so behind. When Smith reaches the point "*d*," he stops until Jones reaches "*e*." From "*e*," Trooper Jones can see the troopers at "*c*," and no enemy being visible, he signals "All clear" to Trooper Smith, who, in his turn, signals "All clear" to the main body at "*b*."

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The corporal then rides up to the house. Trooper Robinson follows, and places himself among the trees at "*g*," so that he can see both the corporal and the man left at "*b*."

Presently the owner of the house—a surly-looking Belgian farmer — appears. In answer to a question addressed to him by the corporal, he says that he has seen no one about this morning. Just as the Scots Grey is turning to go away, however, he notices some freshly-made hoofmarks leading to a door in a high wall at "*f*." Glancing casually in that direction, what is his surprise to see the point of a lance just peeping over the top of the wall.

"Hallo!" thinks the corporal, "that's a funny sort of agricultural implement, anyhow!"

He pretends not to notice it, however, and jumping off his horse, demands a glass of water. While the farmer goes into the house to get it, the corporal stoops down, makes-believe to loosen his saddle girths, taking good care to keep his horse between himself and the wall, and while doing so, makes a slight signal with his hand to Trooper Robinson at "*g*," which means, "Enemy. Bring up the support."

The latter at once passes it on to the trooper left at "*b*," who in turn signals to the man at "*a*," who gallops off to bring up the "support troop" of Scots Greys which is following about three miles behind the patrol.

Trooper Robinson then rides up to the corporal. The farmer is asked to produce some beer, and both men

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slowly fill and light their pipes, chatting and laughing, though they know perfectly well that at any moment a couple of bullets may come from behind that wall ten yards away—a range at which it is rather difficult to miss! But all the time the corporal's ears are straining for the sound of the approaching troop. Presently he hears the faint thud of hoofs in the distance. Rising with a yawn, and stretching his arms, he tightens his horse's girths and trots away down the drive with Trooper Robinson. They have hardly reached "*b*" before the lieutenant in command of the troop gallops up, his thirty men surround the wood, and presently three shame-faced Prussian Uhlans are unearthed in the farmyard.*

It appears that seeing a patrol approaching, they had taken refuge behind the wall and in the barn, hoping to remain concealed until the British had passed. But they had forgotten that a nine-foot lance shows over the top of an eight-foot wall!

The Uhlans are questioned by the lieutenant of the troop with reference to the position of the German forces, but they refuse to give any information. The subaltern sees by their uniform buttons that they belong to the 2nd Uhlans, and he mentions this in the report which he sends to his colonel, so that the latter may at any rate know that *that* regiment is in the neighbourhood. Later on, when the report reaches headquarters, General

* It may strike you as rather absurd that the corporal should take the trouble to send for a whole troop to capture three men. But then, how did he know there were only three? There might have been a dozen concealed in the farmyard.

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Douglas's chief staff-officer looks up the list of the German army, finds that the 2nd Uhlans belongs to the 2nd German Cavalry Brigade, which he knows is attached to the 2nd German Army Corps, and he therefore deduces the fact that the latter force is somewhere in the vicinity of Namur. So you see what a lot of information can be got out of the capture of three Uhlans, even if they, as in this case, refuse to open their mouths.

Evidence is so strong against the Belgian farmer that the lieutenant makes him a prisoner for sheltering his country's enemies, and sends him to the rear with the captive Germans under an escort of two troopers. They hand him over to a Belgian officer at Archennes. The latter reads the accusation which the lieutenant has hastily scribbled in pencil, a court-martial is quickly assembled, and before midday the farmer is standing with his back to the courthouse wall looking down the muzzles of six Belgian rifles. Rough and ready justice, you may say; but then people are not apt to be over-tender with traitors when their country is being devastated by the march of a foreign army. It is only one little addition to the many ghastly horrors of war.

We will now leave our Scots Greys' patrol, and follow once more the movements of the whole cavalry screen.

At about 5.30 the line of patrols reaches the valley of the Dyle River,* where half an hour's halt is made while

* The Dyle is shown on *Map 3*, but remember that the patrols have not yet reached the position in which they are marked on that map.

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the towns and villages along the stream are searched, and information obtained from the inhabitants. At six o'clock the patrols again move forward towards Namur. As they ascend the gently sloping sides of the Dyle valley, their progress is very slow, for there are several large woods on the right bank of the stream. As a rule, it is very difficult for cavalry to get through a wood; but this is not the case in Belgium, where there are practically no bushes or undergrowth.

The woods are thoroughly examined, for the enemy must now be very near. According to last night's orders, some German cavalry were reported to be at Gembloux yesterday. They have apparently been moving forward this morning, for the Belgian postmaster at Ottignies tells one of the British officers that he could get no one at Ernage to answer him when he telegraphed at 5.30 a.m. It is concluded from this that the Germans are either occupying the village, or that one of their raiding parties has cut the wires.

At a quarter to seven, the British cavalry screen is in the position shown on *Map 3*.

As a patrol of the 12th Lancers, which is working through a wood near Chenoy, reaches its southern edge, the corporal in charge hears a couple of sharp reports.

"Revolver shots!" he exclaims, and motioning with his hand to the rest of the patrol to keep back among the trees, he peers cautiously out towards Justice Tree cross-roads.

About a quarter of a mile away, a man in the familiar

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drab uniform is galloping furiously along the road which leads past Chenoy Wood to Etienne. One hundred yards behind him are four blue-coated men—Cuirassiers by their uniforms—their lances couched, their horses pounding away on the hard ground.

The man in drab—he is evidently a British scout—turns in his saddle and blazes a couple of shots with his revolver at his pursuers. The Cuirassiers fire rapidly in return. The scout's horse swerves, and suddenly goes dead lame.

His rider leaps off, unslinging his rifle from over his shoulder as he does so, and drops on one knee.

Bang! Click-clack! as he jerks the empty cartridge-case out. Bang!

Bravo! he has bowled two of them over; but it is all up with him, for the others are close on him now. He has just raised his rifle for a last shot, when there is a sharp volley from the patrol in the wood, and the horses of both Cuirassiers come crashing to the ground.

In a moment the Germans are surrounded and captured. The scout turns out to be one of a "special patrol," several of which, as you will remember, were sent out this morning to reconnoitre ahead of the cavalry screen.

"We fell in with a party of about forty of the enemy's cavalry at Ernage, half an hour ago," he tells the lieutenant in command of the troop, who, having heard the firing, comes galloping up from Chenoy. "The others were caught, but I was a bit behind them and managed to get away."

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The Lancers are evidently getting into touch with the enemy, for Ernage is only four miles from Chenoy. The subaltern tells the scout that he will find several horses in the village; and then, writing a few words on a page in his notebook, he tears it out and hands it to one of his men.

"Take that to Major O'Brien," he says, referring to the major of B Squadron, to which his patrol belongs. "Go as quickly as you can. You will probably find him at Etienne, straight along this road."

In less than ten minutes the messenger is with Major O'Brien, who is riding with the 4th Troop of B Squadron about three miles behind the patrol line. On reading the lieutenant's report, the major writes the following note:—

ETIENNE,
7.4 a.m., July 16th, 19—.

Forty of the enemy's cavalry captured one of our special patrols at ERNAGE at 6.30 a.m. My patrols are still advancing.

To O.C. 12th Lancers,*
On the NOIRHAT–MOUSTY road.

P. O'Brien, Major,
O.C. B Squadron,
12th Lancers.

He hands the note to a trooper, who gallops off through Etienne and Noirhat, and then along the road to Mousty, on which he eventually finds Colonel Jones. Meanwhile the major advances with his 4th Troop to Chenoy Wood.

During the next hour—that is to say, between seven and eight o'clock—the whole of the long line of patrols forming the British screen comes into contact with the enemy's cavalry. As it would be impossible to describe clearly in detail, and in a reasonable space, the events

* O.C. signifies "officer commanding."

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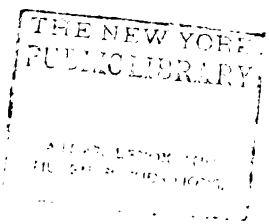
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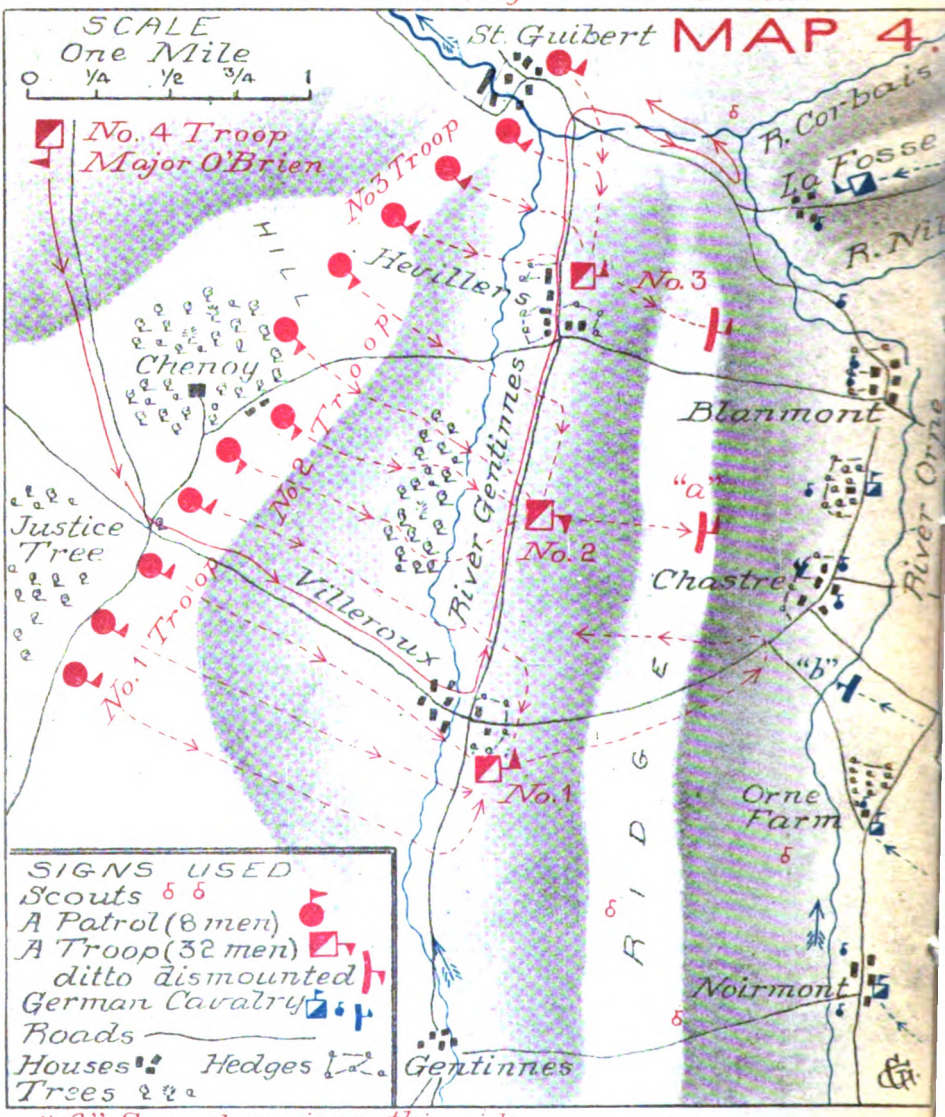
The Scots Greys are on this side



"A" Squadron is on this side

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which occur along the twenty miles of country occupied by the screen, I will merely narrate to you the story of the fight which takes place when B Squadron of the 12th Lancers finds the enemy near the village of Chastre.

On the left-hand side of *Map 4* you will see the position of B Squadron's twelve patrols shortly after the rescue of the British scout near Justice Tree crossroads. They are advancing steadily towards the east, as shown by the dotted lines and arrow-heads. Remember that the line of patrols is continued to the north-east by the Scots Greys, and to the south-west by A Squadron of the Lancers.

As the patrols of No. 3 Troop pass through St. Guibert, they chase a couple of Cuirassiers out of the town. These disappear along the road to Blanmont at a gallop. The townspeople report that they are the first Germans they have seen.

Descending into the valley of the Gentinnes, the patrols of B Squadron cross the brook and halt on the other side. The two men who form the "point" of each patrol ride to the top of the low ridge and peer down into the valley of the Orne. Their attention is at once attracted by several horsemen trotting along the roads on each side of the river, so they signal to their patrols that the enemy is in sight. A couple of scouts from No. 2 Troop ride towards Chastre, but are instantly fired at by some Germans concealed in the village. One man's horse is shot, but the other trooper takes him up behind him, and gallops back with the news that the enemy is occupying the place.

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The four patrols which form each troop now join each other, and presently Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Troops are assembled in three separate bodies under cover of the ridge, as shown on *Map 4*. The captain of the squadron ascends the hill to see for himself what the situation looks like, and several dismounted scouts are sent forward towards the farms and orchards along the Orne. Whenever they show themselves they are fired at, and the Lancers lose two or three good men. One of the scouts returns, however, and reports that he can see only a dozen men in Chastre.

Captain Melville at once descends into the valley, mounts his horse, gives an order to the lieutenant of No. 2 Troop, and then gallops off to No. 1.

No. 2 Troop dismount, leave their horses tied together in charge of a couple of troopers, and advance up the ridge in a long, thin line, the men half a dozen yards apart, rifle in hand. They crawl over the top of the ridge to the far side (*point "a" on Map 4*), where they get a good view of the little village of Chastre. Here they lie down in some high corn, and open fire on several mounted Germans moving about in the street. Two of the horsemen drop, and the remainder quickly disappear behind the houses.

As the bang! bang! of the British rifles breaks the peaceful stillness of the valley, No. 1 Troop canters up the ridge, sweeps across the top, and gallops towards Chastre. Only two or three shots greet them, and then the men farther along the hill see half a dozen Cuirassiers dashing out of the far end of the village.

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But "there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." Just as the Lancers get within a quarter of a mile of the nearest buildings, there is a crash of rifles on their right, and a terrific fire sweeps their line from end to end, emptying several saddles, and throwing the whole troop into disorder. A squadron of Cuirassiers has suddenly galloped up to the Orne, dismounted (*at the point "b"*), and opened fire. No. 1 Troop scatters, swings to the left, and gallops back over the ridge in some confusion, while the Germans pour into the village.

Again the place resounds to a crackle of musketry, and for several minutes showers of lead from No. 2 Troop on the hill and the Cuirassiers in Chastre sweep the intervening ground. Little damage is done to either side, for the men have concealed themselves well, and there is no smoke to betray the positions of the firers. The fusillade soon dies away, and once more, save for an occasional shot, all is quiet.

Major O'Brien at Chenoy, hearing the heavy firing, signals to Colonel Jones that the patrols have encountered the enemy, and gallops into Villeroux with No. 4 Troop. (The movements of this troop are shown on *Map 4* by a continuous red line and arrow-heads.) Leaving his horse in the valley, and accompanied by a couple of troopers, he crawls through a cornfield on the top of the ridge, and joins Captain Melville. The latter tells him what has happened; and after scanning the enemy's position carefully through his field-glasses, the major makes up his mind what to do. He sends an order to the lieutenant of No. 4 Troop to

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advance from Villeroux through St. Guibert, and from there to try to get round Blanmont, in order to find out if the enemy is really in great strength, or merely consists of some wandering reconnoitring squadrons.

The 4th Troop dashes off as directed, and following the continuous red line on *Map 4*, reaches a little village called La Fosse in about twenty minutes. Here, however, it is met by a heavy fire coming from an invisible enemy on a hill between the Corbais and Nil Brooks. The lieutenant retires his troop, with several casualties, to St. Guibert, and sends a message to his major telling him the result of his attempt to get through the German line.

As several large bodies of cavalry now appear behind Chastre and Blanmont, Major O'Brien orders B Squadron to retire behind the Gentinnes brook. Nos. 1, 2, and 3 Troops again break up into patrols, which place themselves at intervals along the brook, and conceal themselves as much as possible. No. 4 posts itself behind the wood north of Villeroux, and only a few scouts are left on the ridge. Shortly after this retirement is effected, Colonel Jones arrives at Chenoy with C Squadron and the Lancers' machine gun.

Half an hour later, a scout on the ridge opposite Chastre signals that the enemy is assembling in force at Orne Farm. The colonel at once sends two troops of C and the machine gun into Villeroux. The men dismount, leave their horses behind the houses, and line some garden walls and hedges near the brook. Presently the Lancer scouts come dashing down the ridge, across the valley, and over

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the stream. Then a thick blue line of horsemen—German Dragoons—appears on the top of the hill, preceded by a number of scouts cantering three or four hundred yards in front. The Lancers reserve their fire until the enemy gets within a quarter of a mile of them; then they let drive. Rifles and machine gun splutter and crackle, and a hail of lead is poured on the advancing mass, the Maxim spitting out bullets at the rate of six hundred a minute. The Dragoons have evidently not expected this warm reception, for they are moving in a solid mass, and present a splendid target for the British. Scores of saddles are emptied, the squadrons waver, turn about, and, scattering in all directions, gallop back over the ridge.

Except for some spirited attempts by the German scouts to get through their line, the Lancers are now left comparatively undisturbed for several hours, so we will take a brief glance at the doings of other parts of the cavalry screen.

While the fight has been going on around Chastre, the Scots Greys have also been having a skirmish with the enemy's cavalry.

If you look at *Map 3*, you will see two villages called Corroy and Corbais. The Scots Greys' patrols approach these villages from the north almost at the same moment as the German cavalry do from the south. The Germans get into Corbais first, dismount, and check the advance of the British patrols with carbine fire.

At Corroy, however, there is an exciting little incident.

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A patrol of the Scots Greys enters the village from the north at the same moment as a score of Uhlans march into it from the south. They catch sight of each other when a quarter of a mile apart. The Germans set spur to their horses, and charge down the little country road bordered with cottages, gardens, and trees. The Greys are outnumbered by three to one, but their South African experiences have taught them a better thing to do than charging.

Jumping off their horses, the troopers drop on one knee across the road. Each man opens the magazine of his rifle, and the next instant half a dozen Lee-Metfords are pumping out bullets at the rate of twenty a minute. The German horsemen simply collapse—there is no other word which will describe the result of this leaden hail. They cannot get within one hundred yards of the Greys. Men and horses fall in heaps, and out of the twenty Uhlans who started on this fierce charge, only one solitary man succeeds in escaping. A troop of the Greys (No. 4 Troop of B Squadron on *Map 3*) now gallops up and takes possession of the village.

The Royal Dragoons, who form the left of the screen, have also come into contact with the enemy near Grez-Doiceau; and the 10th Hussars, on the extreme right of the line, have encountered large bodies of German cavalry about a mile south of Rèves and Avelines. The latter have attempted to advance, but have been checked by the skilful manner in which the Hussar colonel manœuvres his regiment.

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General Situation of the Cavalry Screen at 8 a.m.

It is now a little after eight in the morning. The march of the British screen has been checked along its whole length by what is apparently a large German cavalry force.

The patrol line is approximately in the same position as that in which it is shown on *Map 3*.

The support troops have come up and halted immediately in rear of the patrols.

The reserve squadrons have also arrived near the scene of action, and are at intervals in rear of the patrols.

The main bodies of the brigades, with their horse artillery batteries, have galloped up along the roads, and are halted along the highway from Nivelles to Wavre, waiting for orders. The direction of advance of all these bodies of cavalry is shown by dotted lines and arrow-heads on the map.

It will be well for you to make a note of this position, for we must now leave the cavalry screen. Later, we will return to see how it is faring with the Germans. For the present, other parts of the army claim our attention.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF AN OFFICER'S PATROL.

(Note for the reader :—The track of this patrol is shown on *Map 2*.)

AT six o'clock in the evening of the 15th of July, the day before the Cavalry Division starts on its reconnoitring march, three horsemen leave the village of Waterloo and trot along the broad, well-kept highroad to Genappe.

The little wiry man riding on the chestnut is Major Garforth of the Royal Engineers—the "Sappers," as they are called throughout the army—one of Lord Kitchener's best intelligence officers.

He first made his mark in this particular line several years ago, before the South African war, when he was stationed at Cape Town as a lieutenant. He had heard rumours of the great forts the Boers were making at Pretoria, the plans of which were kept very secret. So he obtained leave of absence, and without telling any of his friends where he was going, disappeared from the world for several months.

About a fortnight after Lieutenant Garforth had "gone on leave" from Cape Town, an unkempt, dirty-looking

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German, Shroeder by name, was engaged by the Boer authorities at Pretoria as a labourer at one of the forts. This fellow proved to be such a good workman, and used his pick and shovel with such energy, that he was continued in his employment for several weeks. He picked up a fair smattering of Dutch; and later, showing himself well acquainted with bricklaying and concrete work, was sent to join a motley gang of men who were employed in building large masonry bomb-proof chambers, magazines, and gun-platforms. Now these were the parts of the fortifications of Pretoria which the Boers most desired to keep secret, as at that time they did not wish the fact that they were making extensive preparations for war to be generally known. If by any chance they had suspected any of their workmen of being spies, those men would probably have vanished on some dark night, never to be heard of again.

One day, when Shroeder was busy laying mortar on the brick wall of a magazine near one of the forts, a man rode up. If you had been watching the German very closely at this moment, you would have seen him give the slightest perceptible start, and heard him mutter in capital English, "Sergeant-major Grove, by Jupiter!" This might have struck you as peculiar; for when this horseman gave him some directions about his work in English, Shroeder shook his head violently and talked German. Again, Grove was the name of a sergeant-major in the Sappers who had deserted from a company at Aldershot, in which a certain Lieutenant Garforth was serving at the time;

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and this German workman had never been in England in his life, according to his own account.

Another peculiar fact about Shroeder was that he spent his evenings in a secluded spot, drawing complicated figures on very thin tissue paper. When done with, this paper was wrapped in oil-silk and stowed carefully away in the hollow heel of one of Shroeder's boots.

Possibly it was a coincidence that shortly after Lieutenant Garforth's return from leave, the War Office in London was in full possession of the plans of the various forts around Pretoria; and that, when the young Sapper subaltern arrived in England some months later, he was immediately sent to join the Intelligence Department.

The man riding on Major Garforth's right, this warm July evening in Belgium, is Lieutenant Allenby of the Lincolnshire Regiment—the old 10th Foot—whose good work as a scout in South Africa gained him his promotion from a trooper in the Scottish Horse. On the major's left is Sergeant Gray of the Imperial Light Horse, an experienced veteran belonging, like his two companions, to Lord Kitchener's Intelligence Staff.

The trio, in fact, form one of those small "officer's patrols" which, composed of picked and trained scouts, are sent miles ahead of an army on the march to pick up early information of the enemy's movements. These patrols often penetrate fifty or sixty miles into a country infested by the enemy's scouts, and consequently run many risks in their perilous quest for news.

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Three miles from Waterloo, the road crosses the famous battlefield of that name. The major reins up suddenly. Half a mile to his right the slanting rays of the sun, now sinking in the west, gild the tops of a scattered grove of trees with a lustre of greeny gold.

"By Jupiter!" he exclaims—it is a favourite expression of his—"just fancy our fighting here again after an interval of nearly ninety years! That must be Hougoumont over there in the grove. Chateau de Goumont, they call it here."

"Rum thing!" says Allenby. "The French, then, against English, Belgians, and Germans. Germany and France have 'changed rounds.' Wonder how it will end?"

"End?" echoes the major. "Why, we'll win, of course. These Germans have taken precious few lessons from our war with the Boers."

"The French have taken fewer still, sir," the sergeant remarks, "and the Belgians none at all."

"True," replies the major. "There will be awful slaughter, whoever wins; all the more because the Germans believe in piling mass upon mass of men on to their enemy when they attack him. That is a fetish of theirs; they did it in the last Franco-German war. St. Privat, was it not, where four regiments lost nearly all their officers and over 4,000 men in less than three-quarters of an hour. And there were no magazine rifles then! There will be awful slaughter if they try that sort of game now, by Jupiter!"

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At Genappe the sound of distant firing breaks faintly on the ears of the scouts. It comes from the German heavy guns round the Namur forts, seventeen miles away.

Towards eight o'clock the little party reaches Quatre Bras, a small hamlet at the crossroads where the four broad routes from Brussels, Nivelles, Charleroi, and Namur meet, and where the fierce fight took place between the British and French in 1815. Here they find a patrol from the Belgian force at Nivelles, and halt to rest their horses and wait for darkness.

After a good meal at the inn, the major spreads his map of the country on the table, and calls a council of war.

"Light your pipes," he says. "We may not get a chance of another smoke for some time."

The three men then proceed to discuss their plans. When they have finished, the major says,—

"Now that we have got everything settled, I will just run through the main points, so that we shall each know exactly what to do in case we get separated.

"First of all, Lord Kitchener's orders are that we are to get as near Namur as possible, find out what progress the Germans have made with the siege, and give him early notice of any important movement on their part.

"We have settled that we will try to get into one of these woods south-west of Beuzet"—here the major points to a place on his map (*see Map 2*)—"if we can get through the German patrols between Docq and Gembloux.

"If we have to run for it, and get separated, we will try to meet at this farmhouse"—indicating one on the

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map near Beuzet—"but if it is occupied by the Germans, we must each work on his own account. It will be much better for us to stick together, if we can manage it, as we can always separate and hide in the daytime. And remember the signals—the hoot of an owl means '*Danger, be careful,*' and the grouse's call means, '*Come here.*'"

It is half-past nine when the trio set out from Quatre Bras. There is a slight breeze from the south-east, and the moon is luckily obscured by heavy drifting clouds, though at intervals these allow a glorious white light to burst suddenly over the landscape. Our scouts are not poetically minded this evening, however, and these occasional illuminations are greeted with muttered remarks which savour little of blessings.

They ride straight along the Namur road, questioning the inhabitants of each village that they pass through. All agree in saying that the Germans have not been seen this side of Docq to-day. The greatest caution is observed, however, for it is extremely probable that the enemy's patrols may be about at night; and after leaving Marbais, the scouts ride in Indian file in the fields alongside the road. This is a very easy matter in Belgium, as there are hardly any hedges or fences as in England.

About a mile from Docq crossroads, they make a wide detour to the north, and then cross the Docq–Gembloux railway. As they approach the highroad running parallel to it, Major Garforth, who keeps one eye on the sky, notices a faint gleam of light showing on the clouds. He gives a sharp "Tuwhoo-tuwhoo," and in an instant the three

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scouts are lying flat in the wheatfield, their horses, trained to obey the same signal, beside them.

They are not a moment too soon, for the clouds drift away from the face of the moon. A sudden flood of light makes everything as clear as day, and the figures of several men sitting motionless on their horses in the road, barely fifty yards away, are disclosed. The little Sapper's sharp ears had caught the faint click of a stirrup-iron.

Have they seen or heard anything? Hardly, for the breeze is blowing from them towards the scouts, and the noise of the bombardment of Namur comes faintly down on it. But what is that? One of the men has risen in his stirrups, and is peering over the fields, straight towards the spot where the patrol is lying concealed. He says something to his comrades. They laugh.

"Karl is always seeing something," says one.

"Spooks, Karl?" asks another.

But Karl is not to be put off by chaff. He dismounts, climbs the fence, and walks through the tall wheat, which rises well above his knees. Our scouts are tried campaigners, Allenby especially. He has been through a hundred skirmishes with the wily Boer, but even he can almost hear his heart beat. There is something in the night that renders the situation mysterious, thrilling—the damp, cool breeze rustling the corn; the pale, white light of the moon glittering on the queer-shaped helmets and long lances of those dark figures in front; the booming of the distant guns.

The tall figure of the Uhlan approaches nearer and

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nearer. He is within thirty yards, when suddenly a curtain of clouds shuts out the moon, and the night becomes pitch-black again. The long boots, swishing and crunching through the corn, still come on; but, luckily, their owner loses his direction in the dark, and passes to one side of the little group. Allenby's hand twitches as the Uhlan passes. By stretching out his arm, he could seize and throttle him. Then the searcher retires baffled. His comrades jeer him unmercifully as he regains the road, and three hands loose their grip on three revolvers.

How near he has just been to death that Uhlan little knows!

Presently the scouts hear the Germans move off to the right. Major Garforth creeps forward to reconnoitre, his well-trained feet scarcely making a sound. As he reaches the road, there is a clatter of hoofs, and half a dozen of the enemy's cavalry pass close to him. A little to his left the major finds a gate, and giving the grouse's call, is presently joined by his companions. They quickly cross the road into the field on the other side.

A little farther on they approach a small building lying in a hollow, with a light flickering feebly from a window. Grey dismounts and walks cautiously forward to reconnoitre. Stealing up to the house, he conceals himself behind a thick bush, from which he can see into the lighted room.

A German is seated at a table, puffing clouds of smoke from a capacious pipe, and poring intently over a map stretched in front of him. From time to time he turns

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and makes a remark to some one behind him, whom the scout cannot see.

Presently the noise of approaching footsteps makes Grey lie flat behind the bush. A trooper with a carbine over his shoulder appears for a moment in the light shining from the window, and then disappears into the blackness again. The house is evidently occupied by officers. It is possibly the headquarters from which some of the patrols in the neighbourhood have been sent out.

Sergeant Grey returns and reports what he has seen. Major Garforth now decides that they must leave their horses at the first opportunity. Shortly afterwards they come to a farmhouse, which proves to be unoccupied by the enemy. An arrangement is quickly made with the farmer, who promises to look well after their steeds until they return.

Having concealed their saddles, the three scouts resume their march. At about 12.30 they cross a single line of railway, and by reference to their maps, and with the assistance of occasional moonshine, they succeed in making out roughly where they are. Just ahead of them, running up the sides and clothing the top of a hill, is a large wood, which they identify as being about two miles south of Beuzet, and five north-west of Fort Suarlee, one of the chain of forts which encircles Namur about two and a half miles from the edge of the town.

They have some difficulty in getting through this forest, as, contrary to the usual nature of the Belgian woods, the

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trees are large and the undergrowth fairly thick. Their progress is also delayed by the caution which they have to observe, as at several places they come within an ace of being discovered by German patrols.

From the far edge of the wood the ground slopes away gradually, with several gentle undulations, towards Namur. The scouts separate and conceal themselves, from eighty to a hundred yards apart, in thick beds of fern and bracken under the trees.

Scarcely have they settled down when a couple of Germans nearly walk over Major Garforth. "Infantry, by Jupiter!" thinks the major. "We must be getting 'hot,'" with a smile to himself over the old "hide and seek" expression. It is a different game of hide and seek he is playing now, compared with that he played as a boy twenty-five years ago.

The continual roar from the German heavy guns and howitzers, the constant flashes of which he can see scattered over the whole countryside, puzzles the major. It is not the usual custom of besieging troops to fire so violently all through the night.

Suddenly the booming ceases, and a dead silence reigns supreme. The major makes a note of the time, and finds that it is 1.23 a.m. A few minutes later, a distant and prolonged muttering noise comes faintly down on the night breeze.

"Rifle fire, by Jupiter!" says the major to himself. "They must be making a night attack on Suarlee."

Through his glasses he can see spurts of flame away in

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the distance towards the fort. These gradually pale as day breaks, but the muffled "rub-a-dub-a-dub-a-dub" of the rifles still continues. The noise swells in volume as the sky slowly lights with the gray of early dawn, for the field artilleries of the contending armies then join in and add their sharp bark to the general chorus. A short time afterwards the booming of the heavy guns recommences with redoubled vigour, and Major Garforth sees through his field-glasses puffs of smoke marking the spots where the big shells burst.

But not at Fort Suarlee. That is suspicious. "The place must have been taken," thinks the major, and his face grows serious. If Suarlee has been captured, it is extremely likely that Namur will soon fall; for the hill on which the fort stands commands the surrounding country, and from it the Germans can pour shells with their heavy guns into the long line of trenches, batteries, and redoubts around the town, and also into the town itself. And if Namur falls, it will be grave news indeed to send Lord Kitchener; for the German besieging army of 60,000 men will then be set free to attack the British coming from Brussels, and will thus prevent them from uniting with the Belgian army at Charleroi. The Germans will also have a fortress, which they can quickly render very strong, and from which their armies can safely operate in any required direction.

A glorious burst of pink in the sky heralds the coming of the sun, and shortly after four in the morning of the 16th of July—a sad day for Belgium, as you will pres-

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ently see—its first rays glance through the trees under which the three scouts lie concealed. Half an hour later, at about the same time as the British cavalry start on their advance from Waterloo, the noise of the firing around Namur begins to die away, and finally ceases. Major Garforth still lies in the brushwood, straining eyes and ears towards the beleaguered town, fearing that his forebodings as to its fate are realized.

Shortly after five the sun's rays glitter on the helmets of large masses of men moving towards Namur across the open ground around Fort Suarlee. No firing greets them; all is still. There can be no possible doubt but that Namur has fallen.

The major imitates the grouse's call, and presently Allenby and Grey glide up through the brushwood. Both agree with the conclusion at which their leader has arrived.

"You must both be off at once," he says. "Go by different ways—you, Allenby, towards Quatre Bras; and you, Grey, towards Wavre. Send the news to the commander-in-chief by the first telegraph office which you find is in connection with our lines. I am afraid you will have great difficulty in getting through, but with good luck one of you may succeed. I shall stay here to watch. Good-bye, and good luck to you."

Both men shake the major's hand and disappear in the forest. It is half-past five.

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CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE BAD NEWS FROM NAMUR IS BROUGHT TO BRUSSELS.

ALLENBY is a powerful man, standing over six feet in his boots; but constant practice and long experience have given him the tread of a mouse, and he glides through the wood with less noise than a snake.

When he reaches the railway running along the western edge of the forest, he takes a good look round before he ventures out. Over a mile away he can see the line of tall trees which marks the highroad from Charleroi to Gembloux; the smoke of several farms and small villages curls lazily in the air between him and it; his field-glasses reveal parties of horsemen moving here, there, and everywhere. As Major Garforth remarked, he will have a difficult job getting through the enemy's cavalry with his message.

Allenby drops noiselessly in the long grass as a couple of German infantrymen come through the trees from his right. When they have passed, he crawls out of the wood and along a small half-dried watercourse, avoiding climbing over the railway embankment

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by wriggling through a narrow brick tunnel made for the passage of the little stream. By means of creeping through wheat and barley crops, and along ditches, he makes fair progress. Several times he has to lie very low to avoid detection. Once he gets a straight run of half a mile down a field of Indian corn, and bending almost double, makes up for lost time. He makes up his mind that he cannot possibly get his horse; he has seen too many Germans in the direction of the place where he left him.

He has now to cross the highroad—a matter of the greatest difficulty, as large bodies of cavalry are gathering along it. It was just beyond this road that the three scouts had their narrow escape from Trooper Karl last night.

Allenby waits for a chance for an hour, fuming with impatience at the delay. Then suddenly he hears away ahead of him the muttering of distant rifle fire. (It is now seven o'clock, so that the firing must come from Chastre, where the cavalry skirmish is taking place.) Soon afterwards the German cavalry moves forward at a trot in the direction of the firing. Allenby sees his opportunity and glides forward, keeping alongside a hedge bounding a cottage garden. Pausing before he drops into the road, which is cut through a knoll just here, and is about eight feet deep, he peeps over the edge. Directly below him is one of his old friends the Uhlans!

Allenby's mind is made up in a moment. Not another

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soul is in sight along the road, so he gathers himself together and springs off the bank on to the Uhlan's back. The two men roll off the horse, who staggers under the shock. Allenby's hand is on the German's throat, and he dashes his head with terrific force against the hard road. The man lies stunned.

In an instant the scout has on the Uhlan's tall helmet, and mounts the plunging, frightened horse. As he gallops off, he turns into the first lane he comes to, unbuckles the trooper's coat from the saddle, and wraps himself in it. The only things now which show that he is not a German are his green-brown puttees.

The next ten minutes he spends in a wild gallop along a narrow twisting country lane leading to the north. He keeps a sharp look-out: if caught now, it is certain death, for he has made himself into a spy by putting on the enemy's uniform. But it is the best chance of avoiding detection, and he risks it.

Suddenly a sharp turn in the lane brings him headlong into the midst of a party of troopers, dismounted and standing by their horses. With a shout, in German, of "Orderly! Out of the way!" Allenby flashes through them, and is forty yards away round another corner before they recover from their surprise. Then a shout goes up, for one of them has caught sight of the puttees, and they mount in haste.

Allenby hears that shout. "The fat is in the fire now," he mutters, and swings off down another lane to his left. Before him is a high railway embankment

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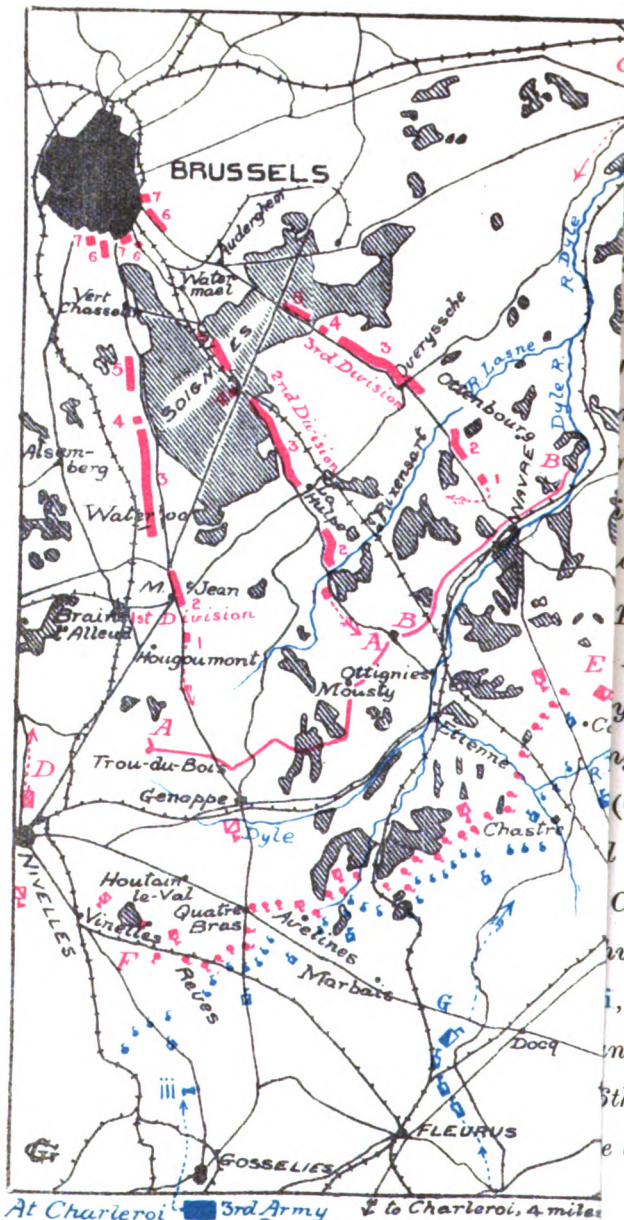

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A couple of Uhlans emerge from the archway through which the lane runs, and advance towards him. His pursuers are not in sight yet, but the Germans' suspicions are aroused, and they bar the way with their lances. Crack! crack! crack! goes Allenby's revolver, and again crack! crack! Both men reel, and the scout is past them.

Through the arch he turns sharp to the right, and then off again to the left, as he catches sight of more of the enemy ahead, reloading his revolver as he goes. The country swarms with parties of German cavalry. When any of these first catch sight of him they take no notice, being deceived at a distance by his cloak and helmet; but they soon find out that something is wrong, and as fast as he eludes one set of pursuers, another lot takes up the chase. Carbines pop behind him, and bullets whistle past his ears.

The horse he has borrowed from the Uhlan is a good one, but the pace is beginning to tell, and Allenby finds himself losing ground. The country road he is following makes a sharp turn through a small wood. The scout half pulls up, leaps off, gives the horse a resounding smack on the flank, which sends him clattering round the corner, and dives into the wood himself. Casting off his helmet and cloak as he goes, he runs through the trees, hearing behind him the shouts of his pursuers as they gallop past along the road. He knows that they will soon find out how they have been deceived, and will return and search the wood, so he makes the best use of his time.

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Just then a rattle of musketry breaks out ahead of him, and he almost cannons into a tall German Cuirassier holding half a dozen horses. Allenby's revolver speaks but once this time, and the next instant he is mounted and galloping through the trees, the other horses following from a matter of habit.

At the edge of the wood he dashes over some blue-coated figures lying on the ground, and firing in the direction of a village about half a mile away. Allenby lies flat on his horse's neck and rides for all he is worth Bullets sing past him in showers, both from in front and behind. The little cavalcade thunders over the green turf, and melts away under the murderous hail. Allenby raises himself upright for a moment, the firing in front stops, and a hoarse British cheer goes up as the men lining the village walls and hedges recognize the familiar drab uniform.

The next moment he is in Avelines, held by a squadron of the 10th Hussars. Two minutes later the telegraph wires are busy flashing to Lord Kitchener the news that Namur has fallen.

This 16th of July is indeed a bad day for Belgium; for scarcely has Lord Kitchener received the report brought by Lieutenant Allenby that Namur has been captured, than a telegram arrives with the news that the Belgian army near Charleroi was attacked by the 3rd German Army Corps at daybreak (*see Map 2*), was eventually severely defeated, and is now in full retreat

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to the west towards the French fortress of Valenciennes. (*This place is shown on Map 1.*)

The situation is serious. It is practically certain that the Germans will advance at once to meet the British army; for to defeat it is the best way to prevent it from interfering with the railway from Cologne through Namur (*Map 1*) which carries the food and ammunition of the German army in the north of France. The British army will be called on to bear the brunt of the attack of four German army corps, for the French are too busily employed on their north-eastern frontier to send any help to Belgium at present.

The only thing to be done now is to keep the Germans at bay while another British army corps is being mobilized and sent to replace the 50,000 Belgians who have been killed, wounded, and captured during the past ten days.

All Lord Kitchener's plans are upset; but he is, as usual, prepared for anything that may happen. During the past week, officers of the Royal Engineers and the staff have been examining the country south of Brussels, and selecting a suitable position for an army to fortify, in order to bar the way to an enemy advancing against the Belgian capital.

Consequently, at 10.30 a.m. on the 16th, General French, who has by this time arrived about two and a half miles south of La Hulpe with the 2nd Division of the army corps, receives an urgent telegram from Lord Kitchener, which runs as follows:—*

* *Map 5* shows the general situation at this moment. Refer to it when you are reading the commander-in-chief's telegram.

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"The 1st Army Corps will intrench itself in a position covering Brussels, in accordance with scheme Number 'A. 23.' The right of the British line will rest on Trou-du-Bois, its left on Mousty. The Belgian army at Louvain has been ordered to prolong the left of the British line from Mousty to Wavre. The Belgians from Nivelles are falling back on Brussels to guard the railway."*

General French takes immediate steps to carry out Lord Kitchener's order. The result of these you will see later. For the present, it is sufficient to say that he orders the cavalry division not to lose sight of the enemy, and to delay his advance as long as possible, to enable the British infantrymen to strengthen their position with field fortifications.

* This number refers to an envelope in General French's possession, and which is marked "A. 23." It contains a copy of the plan made, as mentioned above, by R.E. and staff officers, for occupying a position to defend Brussels. There is now no necessity for General French to trouble Lord Kitchener with questions; all that he has to do is to open the envelope, and he will find full instructions as to where he is to place his army corps.

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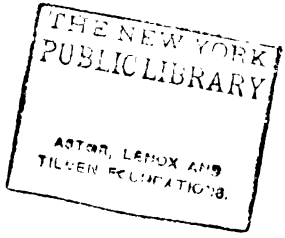

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CHAPTER X.

THE CAVALRY BATTLE AT CORROY.

The British Attack on Nil Ridge.

(NOTE.—*Map 6* is the one to refer to when you are reading this chapter. If you glance at it occasionally, you will find that you will follow the course of the fight between the British and Germans with far greater interest.

In looking at this map, you may wonder what some of the signs on it mean. These are explained on the right side of the map.

Although there is a great deal of shading, showing hills, you must not imagine that the country is at all mountainous. The shading merely shows roughly the positions of the hills and valleys; the former are low, and slope very gently. The country generally is covered with undulating fields of wheat and oats, potatoes, turnips, and other vegetables, which are seldom fenced in, but are usually separated from each other by ditches or low banks of earth. There are very few hedges, except around village gardens and orchards.

The length of this line (one mile)

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shows you the distance on the map at which you should be fairly certain of hitting a large group of the enemy's men with a bullet from your rifle, if they are gathered close together and are plainly visible—for instance, a company of a hundred infantrymen or a battery of artillery.

The length of this line (half a mile)

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shows you the distance at which you have a very good chance of hitting single men with a rifle bullet if they are standing up or kneeling, and you can see them plainly.

Of course, in both the above cases you might hit them when they are farther away if you are a very good shot or are lucky.

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Twice the length of this line

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shows you the distance (four thousand yards, or about two and a quarter miles) at which you should be able to inflict severe loss with the shrapnel shells from your 15-pounder field-guns on a company or a battery, or anything larger, if the men are close together and you can see them plainly.)

HAVING followed Major Garforth's gallant little patrol in its wanderings, and Lieutenant Allenby's dashing ride through the enemy with the news of the fall of Namur, we will turn our attention once more to the doings of the British cavalry screen.

We left it, as you will remember, shortly after it came into contact with the German horsemen (as shown on *Map 3*). Since then, skirmishes have been constantly occurring along the whole line between Grez-Doiceau and Rèves, as the patrols of either side endeavour to push forward and find out what their enemy is doing.

Troops of German cavalry make continual attempts to get through, or round the ends of, the British line, but are met by the reserve squadrons and pushed back again. Similar efforts on the part of the British meet with a like fate, and over the whole countryside a series of small disconnected fights goes on the entire day, both sides gaining small successes or suffering unimportant reverses.

In the centre, however, a very hot action is fought. In this part of the field the patrol line of the British is on Malplaquez Plateau (*Map 6*) and a small detached

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force is in Corroy, while a fairly strong body of Germans is on Nil Ridge and in the village of Corbais.

Lieutenant-General Douglas arrives at Malplaquez Hill a little after half-past eight in the morning. General French's orders to him were "not to let any small bodies of the enemy delay the advance of the cavalry screen."

Now, General Douglas does not know how many of the enemy are in front of him. True, they have stopped his advance for the time being; but then the only parts of his screen which have been engaged so far have been the patrols and their supports, a comparatively small number of men. So he determines to attack the Germans on Nil Ridge: from the resistance he meets with he will be able to gauge their strength.

By the way, you must remember that none of the British generals know of the fall of Namur yet; Lieutenant Allenby is only in the middle of his adventurous ride at the present moment.

General Douglas orders up the main body of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade from Wavre, and the 13th Hussars, horse artillery, and pom-poms from Ottignies. These soon arrive at a gallop, and by nine o'clock the following British troops are near Malplaquez (*see Map 6*):—

The Scots Greys, Inniskilling Dragoons, and 13th Hussars, each about 450 strong; the 2nd Mounted Infantry, 500 strong; O, P, and Q Batteries of the R.H.A.; the pom-poms; and the 2nd Field Troop, R.E., 125 strong. The whole of this force, except the first-named regiment, is at the village of Baraque, waiting for orders.

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A and B Squadrons of the Scots Greys, which have been forming part of the patrol line of the cavalry screen, are scattered along the high ground between Grange Farm on the right and Corroy Wood on the left. You will see the positions of the various troops forming these squadrons on *Map 6*, and will notice that they have sent scouts to Grange Wood, the southern edge of Malplaquez Plateau, and Corroy Wood. Two of the troops are in Corroy, lining the hedges round the orchards on the southern edge of the village, whence they can fire along all the roads leading to the enemy's position on Nil Ridge. C Squadron is in reserve near Baraque.

General Douglas's plan is as follows:—

1. The horse artillery batteries and the pom-poms are to shell Nil Ridge at once. 2. Under cover of their fire, the 2nd M.I. is to make a dismounted attack on Nil Ridge from Corroy. 3. When the mounted infantry has succeeded in thoroughly attracting the enemy's attention, the Inniskilling Dragoons are to make a sudden attack on the Germans from the direction of Corroy Wood; they are, in fact, to deliver what is known as a "flank attack" against the end of the enemy's line. 4. The 13th Hussars and C Squadron of the Greys are to remain in reserve at Baraque, whence they can quickly advance to the help of the mounted infantry if necessary. 5. As Malplaquez Hill is an important point, on account of its commanding the whole of the plateau, the field troop of the sappers is to hold it in case the Germans should make an attempt to gain possession of it.

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At 9.30 a.m. the horse artillery opens the fight. O and Q Batteries come into action on the long narrow hill which runs from Malplaquez Plateau towards Corroy Chateau. (*See "1st positions" of O and Q Batteries on Map 6.*) They fire across Corroy Valley, over the houses and orchards of the village, at a number of the enemy who can be seen moving about on the top of Nil Ridge. These quickly disappear from view, and nothing is left for the gunners to aim at except the bare flat slopes of the ridge.

It is evident, however, that the enemy are still there, for bullets are soon dropping round the batteries, and the ridge is the most likely place for them to come from, on account of its commanding position. The Scots Greys in Corroy, too, send a message to the major of O Battery, saying that the Germans are collected near a sunken road which runs across the ridge immediately opposite the village, where they are concealed in a field of long grass. The batteries therefore keep up a steady bombardment of this place. As there is no visible target, the aim of the guns is constantly altered in such a way that their shells burst in the air at intervals along the ridge, and sow the soil with showers of little round lead bullets.

While O and Q Batteries thus bombard that particular part of the ridge which is to be the object of the mounted infantry attack, P Battery maintains a steady fire from a point near Malplaquez Hill against the centre of the ridge, and also against The Bush, as this little farmhouse is occupied by a small party of the enemy.

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The cavalry and mounted infantry are, in the meantime, getting into position for delivering their respective attacks.

The Inniskillings move off at a gallop from Baraque. The direction of their advance is shown on *Map 6* by a red dotted line and arrow-heads. By keeping behind woods and hills, they succeed in reaching Corroy Wood without being seen by the enemy. Here they find a lieutenant of the Greys, who reports to the colonel that his troop is patrolling the wood, and that a few of the enemy's scouts have been seen in the open country to the east. He is therefore asked to keep a sharp lookout in that direction, and to give warning should the Germans appear in force. The Inniskillings halt at the point marked "*a*" on *Map 6*, while their colonel and adjutant, accompanied by several scouts, advance cautiously through the trees to the southern edge of the wood (*point* "*b*"). From here they catch occasional glimpses of the German cavalry, three-quarters of a mile away on the top of Nil Ridge, dismounted and firing into Corroy. They can also see the whole of the ground over which the mounted infantry will advance to the attack; so the Dragoons' colonel sends off a message by a cyclist to the colonel of the 2nd M.I., saying that he is now in position, and then settles down to watch the progress of the coming fight, and to wait for the right moment to join in it himself.

While the Inniskillings are thus employed in securing a good place from which to deliver their flank attack, the 2nd Mounted Infantry trots forward from Baraque to Corroy. At the north entrance of the village, A, B, and

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C Companies dismount, and leaving their horses with D Company, advance under cover of houses and trees.

Several large orchards and gardens, surrounded by hedges and walls, lie on the southern edge of Corroy. Here the three companies finally assemble, and wait while their officers determine the plan of attack.

Colonel Moore, who commands the 2nd M.I., at once sends out some scouts to try to discover the exact position of the Germans. He also sends for the captains of his four companies. The five officers place themselves behind a high hedge, get out their field-glasses, and proceed to take a careful survey of the enemy's supposed position.

Let us join them, reader, so that we shall be able to see what they see, and thus get an idea of the task before the mounted infantry.

It is now a little after ten. The sun is high in the heavens, and its rays burn hotly on the backs of our necks as we lie in the long grass peering cautiously through the hedge. On each side of us are little groups of mounted infantrymen, sitting on the ground behind tree trunks and in ditches, smoking and waiting for the order to advance.

Every few seconds a shrapnel shell from O Battery shrieks overhead and bursts half a mile in front of us, making a small cloud of smoke, which spreads and rises slowly in the still air.

The ground on the other side of the hedge rises very gently for three-quarters of a mile, the first part clothed

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with yellow, rustling wheat; then, farther on, a crop of bushy turnips; and, at the top of all, a field of long yellow-green grass. From somewhere in the direction of this field bullets come singing through the apple-trees overhead, occasionally ricochetting with a "ping-g-g-g-g" off branches and trunks, or burying themselves with a thud in the solid wood.

That is the only guide we have at present to the enemy's locality. We shall soon have something more to go by, however, for through the corn in front of us the mounted infantry scouts are stealthily advancing towards the top of the hill.

These scouts come from the 4th Sections of A and B Companies, and are divided into six groups,* which move forward in a long, irregular line, about fifty yards apart. Creeping, crawling, crouching, the men steal forward through the high corn. Occasionally the Germans catch sight of one or two of them, and fire rapidly for a minute. But, taking advantage of every little piece of cover afforded by the ground, the scouts steadily advance, until finally they have to stop owing to the shells of the horse artillery, which are bursting along the hill-side. The commanders of the groups now endeavour to discover the enemy's position. By dint of drawing their fire, they succeed in ascertaining it roughly, and send back messengers to their colonel, telling him what they have found out.

* You will remember that mounted infantrymen are trained in peace time to work together in groups of four men. (*See Fig. 18*, p. 63.)

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While the mounted infantry scouts are thus employed, the officers are discussing the situation. The colonel turns to Captain O'Hara of A Company.

"What do you make of it, O'Hara?" he asks.

"I should say the right of their position rests on that hollow road which runs over the top of the hill, sir," replies the captain, referring to a lane which runs out of Corroy towards the south-east, and crosses the north end of Nil Ridge in a cutting. (*Point "c," Map 6.*)

"That is what the Scots Greys' scouts said," the colonel remarks. "It is very difficult, though, to make out how far they extend along the hill, or how strong they are."

"They can't be very strong, sir," says O'Hara, "or they would have some artillery with them."

"That is so," replies the colonel; "unless they have only one battery, and do not care to expose it to the fire of our three. However, we shall soon find out about that when we advance," he adds with a laugh.

Messengers soon begin to arrive from the scouts in front. The colonel pieces together the information brought by each, and finally makes up his mind that the enemy's line extends from the hollow road for about a quarter of a mile along the ridge to the south-west.

He addresses his captains.

"It is now 10.45, gentlemen," he says. "At 11 o'clock I propose attacking the enemy with three companies, keeping D Company at the north end of the village as a reserve.

"Our line of attack will be 300 yards long. The left of the line will advance along that lane," and the colonel

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points to the road before referred to. "You will advance as close to the enemy as the fire from our own batteries will allow you; when it ceases, you will charge with the bayonet. If you should meet with a very heavy fire, do not press home your attack too strongly, but lie down, open a steady fire on the enemy, and endeavour to divert his attention from the Inniskillings, so as to make their flank attack as much a surprise as possible."

The colonel then proceeds to give his captains a few detailed instructions regarding the formations which their companies are to adopt for the advance. The captains return to their companies, and explain the plan of attack to their lieutenants. The latter, in their turn, inform the men in their sections, so that when the time comes for the attack to start, every officer and man in the battalion knows exactly what the colonel intends to do. How very necessary this is in modern fighting you will understand presently, when you read the account of the action

While the mounted infantry officers are making these final preparations for the attack, let us take a brief glance at the situation from the Germans' point of view.

The force which they have in the immediate neighbourhood at this moment consists of the 2nd Lancers and the 4th Uhlans. A German cavalry regiment, by the way, is composed of four squadrons of about one hundred and fifty men each. It is therefore rather larger than a British one, as the latter has only three squadrons.

The positions of these regiments are shown on *Map 6.*

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Two squadrons of the Lancers are in Corbais, and one is behind Nil Ridge, close to the village of St. Martin. The fourth is on the highest part of the ridge, where it is employed in keeping up a continual fusillade on the British horse artillery batteries on the other side of Corroy Valley. These batteries are difficult to see, however, so well does the dull, drab colour of guns and uniform blend with the surrounding country. They are over one and a quarter miles away too, so that the fire of the German troopers, who are only armed with carbines, which are very inaccurate at such a long range, is quite harmless. A dozen men are holding The Bush, a little farmhouse surrounded by a garden.

The Uhlans are on the right of the Lancers. Three squadrons, dismounted, are lying concealed in a field of long grass on the low, broad-topped ridge just opposite Corroy. As the British scouts have reported, the right of their line is close to a hollow road; and they are firing at the houses and orchards of the village, where they can occasionally catch a glimpse of figures moving among the trees and hedges. The Uhlans' fourth squadron is behind the ridge, where the horses of the dismounted troopers on the top are also taking shelter.

The British shells are bursting all around the Germans, some so ludicrously far in front as to raise a jest from the men for whom they are intended. Others whistle overhead and fall into the valley of the Nil behind, where they find an occasional billet among the horses. Now and again a shell explodes at the right moment, and rains its

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bullets down on the Germans, causing some casualties; for though the British gunners cannot see any one to aim at, yet they search the hillside from end to end by dropping their shots over its whole surface.

There is a great deal of grumbling going on among the Uhlans. The officers are swearing in good complicated German phrases, and several on the back slope of the hill are anxiously scanning the country towards Gembloux with their field-glasses. It is easy to gather from their remarks that they are annoyed because their artillery has not arrived.

The hour fixed for the attack draws near. The mounted infantrymen, their pouches and their bandoliers crammed with cartridges, wait anxiously, rifle in hand, for the signal to advance. Colonel Moore is looking at his watch. Suddenly it goes with a snap into his pocket, he waves his hand to Captain O'Hara, a whistle sounds low and clear, and the attack commences.

Fig. 25 shows how the 2nd M.I. advances. You will see from the drawing that A, B, and C Companies are arranged in six long, thin lines. Each line consists of about fifty men placed six yards apart. Remember that the skirmishing line of scouts shown on the drawing has already advanced, and is at this moment lying down about five hundred yards from the Germans.

The first line swarms over the hedges of the orchard, and moves forward at a steady walk over the open field. It is instantly greeted by a hot carbine fire from the

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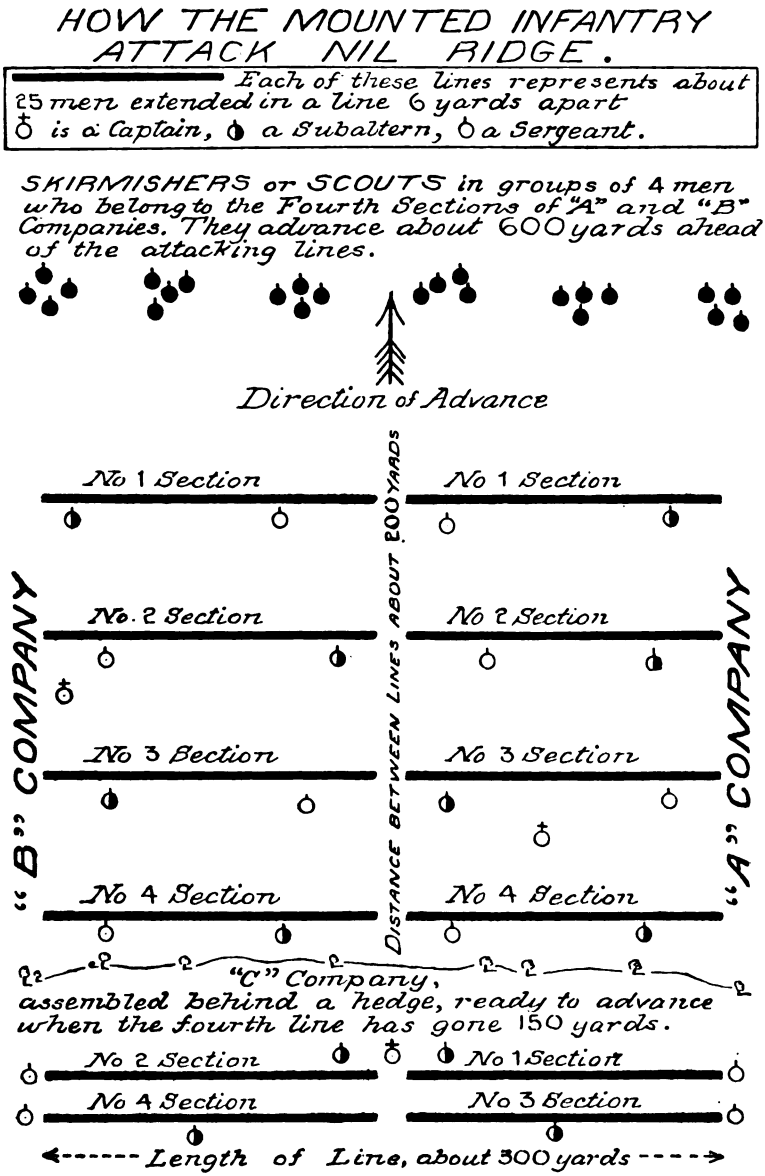
HOW THE MOUNTED INFANTRY ATTACK NIL RIDGE.
Each of these lines represents about 25 men extended in a line 6 yards apart
is a Captain, a Subaltern, a Sergeant.
SKIRMISHERS or SCOUTS in groups of 4 men who belong to the Fourth Sections of "A" and "B" Companies. They advance about 600 yards ahead of the attacking lines.
Direction of Advance
No 1 Section
No 1 Section
No 2 Section
No 2 Section
No 3 Section
No 3 Section
No 4 Section
No 4 Section
"B" COMPANY
"A" COMPANY
DISTANCE BETWEEN LINES ABOUT 200 YARDS
"C" Company, assembled behind a hedge, ready to advance when the fourth line has gone 150 yards.
No 2 Section
No 1 Section
No 4 Section
No 3 Section
Length of Line, about 300 yards

FIG. 25.

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Uhlans, but makes no reply. It is too early in the attack yet for the British to begin to fire. The men are well opened out, and the distance (three-quarters of a mile) is too great for carbines to be of much use, so that but few are hit.

When the first line has advanced about one hundred and fifty yards, the second line follows it, the men extended in exactly the same way. A little later, the third line follows the second, and then the fourth, fifth, and sixth, until finally the three companies are advancing in a series of long, thin lines, one behind another, 150 yards apart. By the time the last line emerges from the orchard, the whole force is scattered over a piece of ground 300 yards broad by 750 yards deep from front to rear.

If you can picture to yourself the scene at this moment, you will realize how difficult it would be for the colonel to give orders to, and control the movement of, his three hundred and sixty men spread out over such a large space. In fact, what with the noise of firing and the hail of bullets poured on the British by the enemy, the task would be practically impossible. Hence you will see the colonel's wisdom in letting every man in the battalion know the plan of attack before he starts, for every one now understands what he is intended to do.

Long before the last line leaves Corroy the British begin to lose men. When the first line arrives within half a mile of the enemy, the fire of the latter grows very heavy. In their eagerness to get a good view of the British, however, and being inconvenienced by the long

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grass in which they are lying, the Germans rise to their knees to take aim. This gives the mounted infantry scouts, away out in front of the advancing lines, an opportunity of which they do not fail to take every advantage. Lying concealed in a field of bushy turnips, a little more than a quarter of a mile from the Uhlans, the scouts open a steady fire on them, and, being all picked shots, soon bring them to their stomachs again.

The subalterns of the mounted infantry also seize the opportunity to put in a little firing, as it is the first time the enemy has shown himself. No. 1 Section of A Company halts, lies down, and fires two steady volleys. While they are doing this, No. 1 Section of B (these two sections form the first line) advances about forty yards. It then lies down and fires while A advances. In this way, one part of the leading line always firing while the other part moves on, the 2nd M.I. sweeps forward towards the top of the ridge.

By the time the first line reaches a point about seven hundred yards from the Germans, it has lost over twenty men in killed and wounded, and the remainder are so shaken by the heavy fire to which they are exposed that they stop and open a furious rifle fire in reply. In trying to control this fire, and to prevent the men from wasting their ammunition, both subalterns of the first line are shot. The non-commissioned officers are wounded, and there is no one left to lead the men on; they remain lying on the ground, taking what shelter they can find, and firing rapidly.

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While they are in this position, the second line sweeps forward and joins them. Encouraged by this reinforcement, and cheered on by the officers, the first line rises, and both move forward together. The leading line, you will notice, now consists of 1 and 2 Sections of both A and B Companies.

At this moment an incident occurs which is so important in its results that we must leave the mounted infantry for a few minutes, and turn our attention to another part of the field of battle.

General Douglas has been watching the progress of the fight from Malplaquez Hill. Ever since the attack started, he has been very anxious about the safety of the right flank of the mounted infantrymen. As you can see from *Map 6*, they would be in a very awkward position if the enemy's cavalry were to charge them from the direction of Corbais. If the British were only in possession of The Bush, they would be able to stop an attack of this sort.

With this object in view, P Battery turns its guns on the farmhouse, and shells it vigorously when the 2nd M.I. starts its attack. Under cover of this fire a troop of Greys gallops along the north side of Bush Ridge, and reaches the point where a sunken road from Burniaux climbs up to The Bush out of Corroy Valley. Here the Greys dismount, and, P Battery directing its fire elsewhere, succeed in stealing up the cutting unobserved. They surprise the small party of Lancers holding the farm, take possession of the place after a sharp fight, and hastily

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barricading the doors and windows, prepare to resist any attempt by the Germans to reoccupy it.

As soon as General Douglas sees that the Greys have captured The Bush, he orders O Battery and the pom-poms to advance to the farm and support the mounted infantry with their shell fire at shorter range. The two batteries limber up and gallop off, followed by C Squadron of the Greys as their escort. On arriving near The Bush the batteries come into action behind the farm buildings, so that they are protected by them from the carbine fire of the Lancers on the centre of Nil Ridge. They then open a hot shell fire on the Uhlans, who are resisting the attack of the 2nd M.I. less than one and a half miles away. (*N.B.*—The positions now occupied by Q Battery, the pom-poms, and C Squadron of the Scots Greys are shown on *Map 6*, and marked "*2nd position.*")

The British are only just in time, for scarcely has Q Battery opened fire when a trooper of the Greys, who has been sent to scout towards Corbais, comes running up the road with the news that a large body of cavalry is advancing up Corbais Valley.

Presently this force appears. It consists of the third squadron of the 2nd Lancers, which is advancing from St. Martin (as shown by the dotted lines on *Map 6*), with the intention of charging the mounted infantry. The latter, scattered in thin lines, are in the worst possible formation for resisting a cavalry charge from any direction, most of all from Corbais.

They are, however, saved by the prompt action of the

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pom-pom battery. Swinging their guns round, the British send a stream of shells bursting in a murderous hail on the German horsemen. When used against foot soldiers in extended order—as the 2nd M.I. are, for instance—the pom-pom shells are not very effective, as they are only about one and a half inches in diameter, and hold very little powder. But it is otherwise when they are fired at a solid line of men and horses, especially when this line—as in the case of the Lancers—is end-on to the pom-poms, thereby giving the latter the finest target that could possibly be desired.

Swept from end to end by this terrible fire, men rolling from their saddles on every side, horses terrified by the venomous, shrieking, exploding little shells spitting out flame and smoke, the Lancer squadron falls into the utmost disorder, and is driven back over Nil Ridge with heavy loss, leaving the ground strewn with the bodies of men and horses.

We must now return and see how the mounted infantrymen are faring in their attack.

When we left them they were, as you will doubtless remember, within seven hundred yards of the enemy, and the first and second lines had become joined together. During the next hundred yards the advance becomes more and more difficult, as the leading line is now within easy range of the Uhlans' carbines. Indeed, it is only the constant bombardment of the British horse artillery beyond Corroy that enables the mounted infantry to continue its

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forward movement at all; for the continual rain of shrapnel bullets descending on the top of the ridge disturbs the aim of the Germans, whose fire would otherwise be most deadly.

The mounted infantrymen are about six hundred yards from the enemy at the moment when Q Battery and the pom-poms cease firing in order to advance to The Bush. The Uhlans, relieved by the sudden decrease in the bombardment which they are receiving, bring a heavier fire than ever to bear on the British, and completely stop the advance of the leading line. The third line then presses forward and joins it. The first three lines are now united in one. For the next ten minutes the men lie flat on their stomachs, maintaining a steady rifle fire on the Uhlans, whom they can now see occasionally in the long grass on the crest of the hill.

Presently Q Battery comes into action again from The Bush, with very unhappy results for the Germans; for not only is the battery now within very effective range (2,500 yards), but its fire is also directed *along* the Uhlans' line. In other words, the British guns are "enfilading" the German position, and you scarcely require to be told what a fatal thing it is to be exposed to "enfilade fire."

Consequently, although the Uhlans' carbine fire is not altogether subdued—for the men are well concealed, and judging their locality is more or less guesswork for the horse gunners—yet it is reduced so much that the mounted infantry is again able to advance. The leading line presses forward steadily, catches up with the groups of

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scouts, and carries them forward until—at a distance of three hundred and fifty yards from the enemy—any further advance is stopped by the shells of the horse artillery, which are bursting in the air and raining bullets down on the ground in front.

The leading line now opens a terrific rifle fire on the enemy. The fourth line sweeps forward and joins it, then the fifth line, and then the sixth.

As the men in the last line, fixing bayonets as they run, tumble on to the ground beside their comrades, the British artillery fire suddenly stops. The dull throbbing sound of horses' hoofs beating on the hard ground breaks on the ears of the mounted infantrymen, followed by a furious outbreak of firing away to the left, which suddenly ceases, and is succeeded by the hoarse shouting of hundreds of voices.

The officers' whistles shriek shrilly along the hillside, a bugler sounds the "charge," and with a ringing cheer the British line rises and dashes up the gently-sloping ridge.

The colonel of the Inniskillings has chosen the right moment for his attack; for it is the noise of his regiment's gallop which has just been heard by the mounted infantrymen, and his wild Irish dragoons are thundering down on the Germans, whose attention is almost entirely directed towards Corroy. A Uhlan, however, catches sight of them the moment they leave the wood, and gives the alarm. Thirty or forty men throw themselves into the sunken road which runs across the ridge (*at point "c" on Map 6*), line the farther edge, and endeavour to check the advancing cavalry with a heavy carbine fire. Instantly there is

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"trp-rrp-rrp-rrp-rrp" from the direction of Corroy (*point "e" on Map 6*), and a couple of mounted infantry Maxims pour a deadly fire along the cutting, both guns spitting out bullets at the rate of six hundred a minute. The sunken lane is swept from end to end by a storm of lead, and the fire of its defenders abruptly ceases.

At the same moment, No. 4 Squadron of the Uhlans issues from behind Nil Ridge, breaks into a gallop, and charges the Inniskillings, in a noble attempt to check their advance and give the dismounted men on the hill time to prepare for their onslaught. The effort is unavailing; for though the German troopers fling themselves against a part of the British line and engage it fiercely, the remainder sweep on, clear the sunken lane, where several horses come to grief, and fall with lance and sword on the wavering ranks of the enemy.

Taken by surprise by the Inniskillings on the right, and charged fiercely by the mounted infantry in front, the Uhlans are in a hopeless plight. For a moment they stand their ground, then break and fly. The Dragoons gallop through the disorganized swarm of fugitives, cutting them down right and left, and rounding up prisoners by the dozen.

The German Lancers farther along the line, dismayed by the fate of their countrymen, retire rapidly down the hill, mount their horses, and gallop off to St. Martin. By midday the drab uniforms of the British are dotted along the top of Nil Ridge, and not an armed German is to be seen.

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CHAPTER XI.

THE CAVALRY BATTLE AT CORROY.

(*Continued.*)

The British Retirement from Nil Ridge.

(Note for the Reader.—Follow the description given in this chapter on *Map* 7.)

MEANWHILE the German cavalry commander, Von Otendorf, who arrived at the western end of Nil Ridge during the British attack, has been anxiously awaiting the arrival of his main body and horse artillery, and making plans for striking a sudden and crushing blow at his enemy.

His scouts have reported to him that Malplaquez seems to be very weakly held by the British, so Von Otendorf determines to try to capture it by a sudden dash with a very strong force; for once in possession of the plateau, he will be able to cut off the British troops who are attacking Nil Ridge.

By the time his main body and the guns arrive, however, he sees that the Germans on the ridge are getting very much the worse of the fight, so he detaches a small force to assist them.

We will follow the action in this part of the field first,

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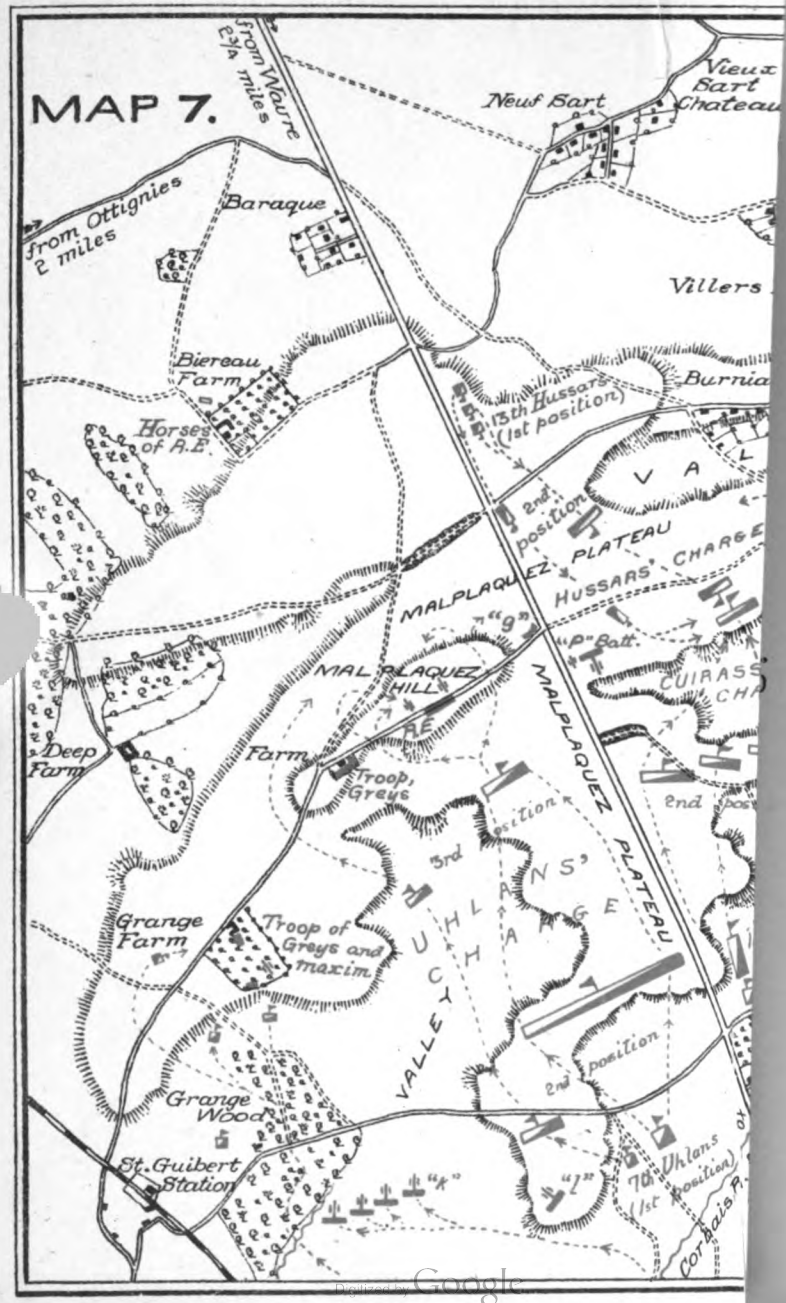

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and then turn our attention to the German attack on Malplaquez.

Scarcely have the 2nd Mounted Infantry and the Inniskillings driven the enemy from Nil Ridge, when there is a sudden roar of artillery, and shell after shell comes plunging into their midst. The German horse artillery batteries have come up at last.

Under cover of this heavy fire, the Lancers who escape from the ridge rally behind the shelter of the orchards and houses of St. Martin. Re-forming their ranks, they dismount, line the hedges and walls of the village, and bring their carbine fire to the assistance of their artillery in checking the British advance.

A glance at *Map 7* will show you the position of the opposing forces at this moment, just after midday.

When the enemy's artillery first opens fire on them, the British are in full view, moving about on the top of the hill. The Inniskillings, who have descended into the valley of the Nil in pursuit of the Lancers, at once wheel about and gallop over the ridge again. Once under its shelter, they re-form into their proper squadrons, which, naturally, have been thrown into some confusion by the rapid movements of the last half-hour, collect their one hundred and twenty prisoners, and send them off to Corroy under an escort. The mounted infantry battalion, too, is in considerable disorder after its charge, the different companies being hopelessly mixed together. There is no opportunity for reorganizing them just at present,

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owing to the enemy's heavy shell fire. The men, however, soon conceal themselves, and presently form a long, irregular line of little groups of varying size—here, twenty or thirty men lining the edge of a ditch; there, half a dozen, or three or four only, collected in a small hollow or behind a mound of earth.

O and Q Batteries gallop up close to the top of the ridge and halt behind it, out of the enemy's sight, while their majors dismount and ascend to find a suitable place for coming into action.

We will follow the major of O Battery, and lie down in the long grass near him (*at the point marked "a" on the map*).

At first we find it almost impossible to tell where the German artillery are; their shells burst along the ridge or fly over it, but no smoke or flame betrays the exact positions of the guns themselves.

The major of O Battery sweeps the ground slowly with his telescope, and beside him the battery sergeant-major does the same with a powerful pair of field-glasses. The ground in front falls away gently to the little Nil, rippling quietly along in the bright sunlight through a peaceful verdant valley, over which are scattered the gardens, orchards, and picturesque red-tiled houses of the villages of St. Martin and St. Vincent. On the other side of the river the ground rises gradually to about the same height as the ridge we are on.

The hedges half a mile in front of us evidently hold the German troopers, for sudden outbursts of firing greet

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the slightest movement on the ridge. A squadron, galloping into St. Martin from the south, momentarily exposes itself to view, and calls forth a brief but furious fire from the group of mounted infantrymen on our right before it disappears behind the trees and houses. But there is not a sign of the enemy's artillery, except their shells, bursting in little clouds of white smoke in the air over the ridge, and raining down pattering showers of bullets.

"There they are!" exclaims the major; and following the direction of his telescope, we scan the country behind St. Vincent.

Just to the left of the village, from our point of view, is a large orchard (*point "b"*). By looking very closely we can see, at first indistinctly and then more clearly, figures moving beyond the trees.

To us they are moving figures, nothing more; but to the practised eye of the major they are men carrying up ammunition from the limbers to the guns, and—what was that?—a momentary flash! Yes, "by Jupiter!" as Major Garforth would say, it *is* a gun!

In another minute O Battery unlimbers, and the guns are run up by hand to the top of the ridge. If the teams brought them up they would suffer unnecessary loss from the enemy's fire, besides betraying their position to the enemy. The guns are placed far enough forward to see the orchard behind which the German artillery is, but not so far forward as to be exposed to the carbine fire from St. Martin.

O Battery "makes capital practice," as a gunner would

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say, and its shells are soon bursting in little white puffs over the trees of St. Vincent. The distance is about one and a half miles, and the British, although they have concealed themselves as well as the ground will allow, are fairly exposed to the view of the German artillerymen. The latter presently pick up the range, and what is known as an "artillery duel" commences.

O Battery soon gets the worst of the encounter, for the Germans have two or three batteries in action, judging by the number of shells which come flying from St. Vincent. So the major gallops off behind the ridge to a lane half a mile to his right, accompanied by his range-takers (men carrying instruments for finding out the exact distance of the enemy). Here he quickly selects a new position (*point "c" on Map 7*), sets his range-takers to find the range, and sends a man to bring up the battery. The guns are rapidly run down the slope, limbered up, and O Battery gallops off under shelter of the ridge to join its major. Here, thanks to the range-takers, the gunners are able to commence firing with accuracy at once, whereas the enemy takes several minutes to find the battery in its new position, and then wastes more time in getting the exact range for replying to its fire.

Meanwhile Q Battery is similarly employed on the right of the mounted infantry. Like O Battery, it first comes into action against the enemy's artillery south of St. Vincent; but presently its major sees two German batteries galloping on to the south-west end of Nil Ridge, about three-quarters of a mile away (*point "d" on Map 7*).

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The major thereupon withdraws his guns slightly, so that a small hill conceals them from the view of St. Vincent, swings them round, and opens fire on his new opponents. The latter come into action almost at the same moment. There is practically no cover available; both are in full view of each other, and the firing becomes accurate and deadly.

Q Battery is now in a most responsible position. Its guns are outnumbered by two to one; shells are dropping thickly round it; men are falling on every side. But there is no question of withdrawing from the contest; for if Q Battery retires, the Germans will turn their guns along the ridge, and pour that most destructive and deadly of all fires, an enfilade fire, along the British line.

The major knows this, hangs on to his position, and draws the whole of the enemy's artillery fire on to his own devoted battery. His gunners make splendid practice. "Section fire" is ordered, and the British shells burst over the German batteries as fast as the 12-pounders can pour them forth. The British loss is heavy, but the horse gunners never flinch. There are men with the V.C. in gallant little Q Battery, gained when it won undying fame at Sanna's Post not so long ago, and these drop beside the guns rather than fail their battery in time of need.

Help is at hand. The pom-poms at The Bush swing round and gall the German gunners with a rapid fire of small shells. The troop of Greys in The Bush turn their rifles on the German batteries at a range of less than three-quarters of a mile. Half a company of mounted

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infantry is hastily collected behind Nil Ridge by an officer, and brought up near Q Battery to assist it with rifle fire. Not a moment too soon, however; for about two hundred dismounted Germans dash out of the west end of St. Martin along a sunken lane (*point "e" on Map 7*), and open a strong fire with their carbines on the British at a range of less than half a mile.

In a few minutes, under the powerful fire from rifles and carbines, both Q Battery and the German batteries are silent. Most of the gunners on both sides are killed or wounded, and the survivors lie flat on the ground, wriggling into every little furrow or hollow they can find. The small-arm men alone keep up the fight.

This incident in the battle shows you how helpless a battery is when there is nothing to screen it from view and it comes under its opponents' effective rifle fire. Q Battery has attained its object, however, and has prevented the enemy's artillery from enfilading the British position.

While these exciting events are occurring in the artillery part of the fight, the mounted infantrymen near the sunken lane at the eastern end of the ridge have been keeping up a steady fire on several parties of dismounted Germans, who are posted behind some hedges about half a mile away, in the valley of the Nil. The Inniskillings have retired to a large grass field on the east side of Corroy (*"2nd position" of the Inniskillings on Map 7*), where they are watching the open ground between the ridge and Corroy Wood, in case the enemy should endeavour to cut in behind the mounted infantry from that direction.

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By this time Colonel Moore, who, being senior to Colonel Baker of the Inniskillings, commands the whole of the British force near Corroy, is aware that the enemy are receiving strong reinforcements, for he has caught occasional glimpses of large bodies of horsemen moving about in the Nil Valley behind St. Martin. He is in rather an undecided state of mind. He feels he ought to retire, as he has not enough men to resist a vigorous attack; but, on the other hand, he is loath to retreat from a position which he has captured so successfully.

The matter is soon settled for him, however; for at 12.45 General Douglas's A.D.C. (aide-de-camp) brings him a written order to retire at once to the ridge behind Corroy, in which place he is told to leave a company as garrison. As it happens, Colonel Moore ought to have received this order half an hour ago, for the A.D.C. is the second messenger whom General Douglas has sent. The first was killed by a stray shrapnel shell behind the ridge while he was on his way.

Colonel Moore wastes no time; the retreat is begun at once.

The guns are withdrawn first. This is a difficult matter as regards Q Battery; for, as you know, it is exposed to the enemy's carbine fire from the sunken road at St. Martin. In order to subdue this fire, D Company of the mounted infantry gallops up from Corroy, dismounts in the valley behind the battery, advances up the ridge, and opens a heavy fire on the Germans (*point "f" on Map 7*). Under cover of this, the teams of Q Battery dash up, and,

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though many horses are shot, succeed in bringing the guns safely out of action. Presently both batteries and the pom-poms are galloping away towards Corroy.

The scattered groups of mounted infantry now gradually withdraw one by one, form into their proper companies behind the ridge, mount their horses, which have been led up by the men left as "horse-holders," and trot off to Corroy. The last to leave is D Company. As soon as their comrades are safely away, the different sections make a dash for their horses, each keeping up its fire to the last to deceive the enemy and prevent him from guessing of the withdrawal.

The British are just in time. As D Company clatters noisily into Corroy main street, a regiment of German Lancers emerges from Corbais Valley, and another of Dragoons gallops round the end of Nil Ridge. They are received with a warm fusillade from A and B Companies, who have halted at the edge of the village to cover the retreat of D Company. This speedily checks any attempt at pursuit. The Dragoons wheel about and retire, and presently Nil Ridge is once more crowned with the blue uniforms of the German cavalry, this time accompanied by several batteries of horse artillery.

Meanwhile the Inniskillings are galloping furiously to another part of the field of battle. Their abrupt departure from Corroy arises in the following way.

Soon after Colonel Moore received General Douglas's order to retire, he is joined in the sunken lane on the top

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of the ridge by Colonel Baker of the Inniskillings. The two officers are discussing future movements, and watching the withdrawal of the horse artillery and the Mounted Infantry Battalion, when suddenly the noise of guns firing furiously at Malplaquez breaks on their ears. They level their glasses in that direction.

Boom—boom—boom—boom! go the guns, shot rapidly following shot.

"That's section fire; they must be in trouble," says Colonel Moore, referring to a system of very quick fire adopted by a battery only when it is hard pressed.

"It is—and, by George, look!" exclaims the colonel of the Inniskillings, pointing towards Corbais.

Moore turns his glasses in the direction indicated. On the top of the rising ground beyond Corbais great masses of Uhlans can be seen, moving rapidly towards Malplaquez Hill.

"Get off, Baker," he says quietly. "Go as hard as you can, for they'll want you badly."

Colonel Baker turns, runs a few yards down the lane, flings himself on his charger, and rides furiously off to his regiment (*at the "2nd position" of the Inniskillings on Map 7*). The men are standing or sitting by their horses as he approaches, but in a moment they are in the saddle. A sharp word of command, the regiment breaks into a trot, wheels short round, dashes through the north street of Corroy at a pounding gallop, and is presently tearing along the top of Malplaquez Plateau in a cloud of dust (*"3rd position" of Inniskillings on Map 7*).

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Neither officers nor men know where they are going; but far ahead is the noise of artillery firing fast and furious, and they know it is all right—there will be another hot fight in a minute, for they are "galloping to the sound of the guns," and that means fine fun to an Irishman.

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CHAPTER XII.

THE CAVALRY BATTLE AT CORROY.

(*Continued.*)

The Charge of the Germans on Malplaquez.

(Note for the Reader :—Follow the description given in this chapter on *Map 7.*)

WHILE the 2nd Battalion of Mounted Infantry and the Inniskillings are hotly engaged with the enemy, a grave danger, which almost results in serious disaster, threatens the British right at Malplaquez. It is here, you will remember, that Von Otendorf has determined to make his counter-attack, with the idea of capturing the hill and cutting off the British troops on Nil Ridge.

In order to watch the fight in this part of the field, we will place ourselves on Malplaquez Hill (*at the point marked "h" on Map 7*).

It is between eleven and twelve o'clock. Near us are General Douglas and his staff, watching the progress of the attack on Nil Ridge through their glasses. To our left, about six hundred yards away, is P Battery, dropping shells on to the ridge beyond Corbais. Close to the battery is a troop of A Squadron of the Greys, formerly part of

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the patrol line (*point "g"*). The men have dismounted and left their horses behind the hill. Two other troops of Greys are to our right—one in Grange Farm with a machine gun, and the other in Malplaquez Farm. Some men of the former are patrolling Grange Wood.

The sappers of the 2nd Field Troop, one hundred and twenty strong, are halted behind the hill to our right, with their pack-horses, carrying tools and explosives for destructive purposes, beside them.

Every few minutes cyclists or troopers arrive from other parts of the cavalry screen, bringing reports of what is happening along the whole country-side between Grez-Doiceau and Rèves. General Douglas's C.S.O. (that is, chief staff-officer) is kept busy opening and reading these reports to the general. The latter studies his map, and follows the movements described in the reports. Generally he says, "Very good; there is no answer;" but occasionally he dictates an order to his C.S.O., who sends it off by the messenger. If the order is an important one, two messengers are sent by different roads, so that if the enemy captures one, the other may have a chance of getting to his destination. If there is no answer, a receipt for the report is dispatched by the man who brought it, in order to let the officer who sent it know that it has been received by the general.

Soon after the troop of Greys, as already narrated, captures The Bush, a cyclist rides furiously up from Wavre along the highroad, and hands a message to the general. This is the order from General French (which you have

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already read on page 138), requesting General Douglas to cover the front of the British Army Corps while it is intrenching itself beyond the Dyle.

In consequence of this, General Douglas determines to occupy Malplaquez with as many men as he can spare from other parts of the field, in order to resist the advance of the Germans along the highroad and railway from Namur.

It is now too late, however, to stop the troops who are attacking Nil Ridge, for they would probably lose heavily if they retired under the fire of an undefeated enemy. So General Douglas allows the attack to continue, hoping now more than ever that it will prove successful, in which case he intends to withdraw his men rapidly to Malplaquez before the Germans can re-form.

In the meantime, the general makes preparations to defend Malplaquez Hill against a counter-attack by the Germans. He expects this attack for the following reasons. Knowing now that the German army has been set free to march in any direction it pleases, owing to the collapse of the Belgian forces in the south, he surmises that it will probably advance against the British with the least possible delay, in order to prevent them from interfering with the railway which carries all the supplies and ammunition of the German army in the north of France.

If the general's supposition is correct—it has very sound arguments in its favour—then he has strong grounds for believing that the force which is at this moment in front of him is the advanced portion of a large cavalry screen

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covering the march of the enemy's army. The only thing which puzzles him is the continued absence of the German horse artillery batteries.* Any moment, however, may see their arrival, and also that of the main body of the cavalry. The enemy will then, General Douglas thinks, advance towards Malplaquez, for they are in possession of Corbais, which makes a capital starting-point for an attack against the hill and plateau.

You will here notice an interesting fact. General Douglas has, without knowing it, hit upon the very scheme which is hatching itself in General Von Otendorf's mind. Consequently, the preparations which he now orders are, considering the little time and small number of men at his disposal, really the best he could make for foiling the German cavalry commander's plans.

A cyclist is dispatched with an order for the 13th Hussars to come up from Baraque. The sappers and the troop of Greys on the hill send their horses back to Biereau Farm under charge of a few men, and commence digging intrenchments (*at the points "g" and "h"*). The Greys at Malplaquez and Grange Farms begin fortifying the houses there, and making preparations for defending them against attack.

Scarcely has this work been begun when the general sees that the Inniskillings and the 2nd M.I. are making their final charge on the Germans on Nil Ridge. He watches it anxiously, and as soon as he sees that

* You must remember that it is not yet midday, so that the events related in the last chapter have not taken place.

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it has proved successful, he dispatches a messenger to Colonel Moore, ordering him to withdraw his whole force to Malplaquez. As the messenger gallops off, a Scots Grey trooper who has been reconnoitring towards Corbais dashes up with the intelligence that a large force of German cavalry and artillery is crossing the Corbais brook, and advancing under cover of the hills towards Malplaquez.

This sounds as if shells will be coming soon, reader, so you must imagine that we have taken shelter in the trench which the sappers are hastily excavating (*point "h"*).

The road here has only a very weak fence bounding it, but there are fairly deep ditches on each side. One of these is soon converted by a little digging into a capital trench. Concealed by some high corn in front, the sappers work vigorously with pick and shovel, each man's rifle and ammunition lying in the road close to his hand.

Suddenly, straight in front and over a mile away, our field-glasses show us dark objects moving above the edge of the hill, just where the road from Corbais crosses the rise on its way to Grange Wood. Only for a moment, though; then the figures disappear. There is a loud report, and a shell whistles through the air over Malplaquez Farm, falls harmlessly on the plateau a quarter of a mile behind, and bursts. It is followed by another, which explodes on the ground just in front of the orchard. The Germans, it seems, are aware that the farm contains our men, and are trying to get its range.

Presently they succeed in doing this, and the air is filled with clouds of smoke as the shrapnel shells burst

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and shower their bullets on orchard and house. There is no answering fire, for the Germans are as yet invisible to the thirty Greys garrisoning the farm. We can see some of these in the road behind the house, where they are perfectly safe. The shells cannot get through the house; they may penetrate the outside walls and explode in the front rooms, but the occupants of those beyond are generally well protected from the bullets by the inside walls.

Malplaquez Farm is the target of only a part of the German artillery. Shells are soon bursting all over the hill. There is nothing visible to fire at in return, so our men remain quiet. Sheltered from view by the high corn, sappers and Greys sit in their half-excavated trenches, rifle in hand, ready to open fire when the enemy shows himself.

At 12.30, a quarter of an hour after the appearance of the German artillery, the officer whom General Douglas sent off with the order for Colonel Moore to retreat has not returned with a receipt for his message, nor do the mounted infantrymen show any signs of retiring. The general, therefore, dispatches his A.D.C. with a repetition of the order, fearing that his first messenger has been shot. As a matter of fact, that is exactly what has happened, the unfortunate officer having been killed by a German shell while hunting for Colonel Moore on Nil Ridge.

While the British remain inactive on Malplaquez Hill under the steady fire of the German artillery, some smart fighting is going on at Grange Farm.

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When the enemy's batteries come into action, one of them exposes itself to the view of the Scots Greys at the farm. The troopers first catch sight of this battery just as it gallops over the hill near Corbais (*point "k"*). The machine gun is quickly run down the orchard and directed at the teams. A perfect hail of bullets sweeps away men and horses; for the range is less than half a mile, and a battery and its teams make a fine target at that distance. The enemy consequently lose the use of these six guns; not a soul can live near them.

Only for a few minutes, though. Another battery, seeing the disaster which has occurred, comes into action against Grange Farm (*from point "l"*). At the same moment a regiment of German Lancers enters Grange Wood from the south. Two squadrons dismount: one advances through the trees to the edge of the wood, and opens a heavy fire on the defenders of the farm; while the other makes a detour to the left, and attacks in skirmishing order from the west. The Greys retire hastily to the farmhouse, a stout, old-fashioned, stone building, as they are too few in number to defend the hedges of the orchard. They lose several men in their retreat, but manage to bring their machine gun safely into the court-yard of the house.

Meanwhile the Germans are keeping up a vigorous bombardment of Malplaquez. In half an hour the little farmhouse there is set on fire by the bursting shells. The garrison makes gallant efforts to put out the flames,

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but as soon as they are quenched in one place, they flare out in another. The attempts are finally abandoned, and the men remain crouched in their trenches behind the hedges of the garden.

Our attention is suddenly diverted from the burning building by the shout of "Here they come!" followed by the furious banging of rifles.

Straight in front a number of figures appear on the crest-line of the hill, barely a mile away, moving rapidly towards us ("*2nd position of Uhlans*" *on Map 7*). As they approach, we see they are horsemen extended in a long line, the men, several yards apart, riding at a steady gallop.

The German guns fire faster than ever; shells rain round us. Another long line appears on the left of the first; half a mile away they are clearly visible. There is no cover whatever; the din is deafening; volleys have stopped, and sappers and Greys are firing continuously and furiously as fast as they can load their rifles.

Gaps appear in the ranks of the enemy; not so many as one would imagine, for the men are well opened-out, and most of the bullets pass between them. The modern rifle bullet, too, is so small, that even if it does hit a horse, it does not necessarily follow that he will come down, unless the missile finds a vital part.

They are brave men, these Uhlans, riding doggedly on in the face of a torrent of lead from an unseen foe. And what a gallant show they make! Horses' hoofs are thundering; men shouting; lance-pennons fluttering; helmets,

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swords, and shining accoutrements glittering bright in the midday sun.

It is a magnificent sight, and would be a terrifying one to badly-trained troops. But not to those drab-clad figures on the hillside: most of them have been in South Africa, and know the value of a rifle which can fire ten shots while a horseman gallops a quarter of a mile!

As they approach to within six hundred yards, the German guns fire further and further over our heads to avoid hitting their own men, the Uhlans gradually close in towards the centre of their line, and the pace slowly increases until the horses are travelling as fast as they can gallop (*"3rd position of Uhlans" on Map 7*). *

Profiting by the enemy's shells having ceased to fall around us, half a dozen sweating mounted infantrymen drag their machine gun on to the very summit of the hill behind the shelter trench. As the button which keeps it firing is pressed, the Maxim is slowly swung from right to left, and then back again, along the line of the advancing cavalry, and bullets stream out at the rate of six hundred in a minute. The time for deliberate firing with the rifle has passed; "cut-offs" are pulled out, and magazines are rapidly emptied on the enemy.

Under the terrific fire of rifles and machine gun, parts of the Uhlan line simply melt away. The squadrons

* When charging infantry, cavalry advances in two ranks. At first there are intervals of from five to ten yards between the men, to avoid loss from rifle fire. As they approach nearer, the men gradually decrease these intervals by closing in on the centre man, until, when within one hundred and fifty yards of the enemy, they are riding in a compact line, knee to knee.

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scatter into several groups, which swing to the right and left, sweep across the road, and circle round the rear of our trench. The ground in front is covered with dead and wounded; riderless horses gallop wildly in all directions.

The sappers are now surrounded. Fighting is not their chief duty, but they are occasionally called on to do it, and to-day they uphold the honour of their corps right worthily. Bunched together in groups of ten or twelve, the men stand their ground with fixed bayonets, firing calmly and deliberately, their rifles hot in their hands. The Uhlans make desperate efforts to ride them down, and several of the little bands are swept away by lance and sword. Some of the cavalrymen ride around the groups in circles, firing their carbines from the saddle. But the British hang on obstinately. The slaughter is appalling on both sides; the field troop alone loses half its number, and of the remainder the majority are wounded.

The situation is desperate. Will the mounted infantry never come? Alas! they are only in the middle of their retreat from Nil Ridge at this moment.

General Douglas, with several of his staff, is in the middle of a group of sappers. Beyond the ring of brave determined fellows who surround him with rifles smoking, and mouths set hard in grim defiance of death, the general can see nothing but swarms of blue-coated Germans, circling and wheeling over the ground. Now and again they dash down in a solid body on the devoted little

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party; but their horses refuse to face the bristling bunch of steel bayonets, and, rearing and plunging, open out on each occasion, and sweep by on either side, their riders emptying carbine and pistol as they pass.

Sapper after sapper falls forward on his face. Only half a dozen now surround the general, whose officers have taken the rifles from the dead men's hands, and filled the gaps in the circle. Another charge by the Germans will finish it.

Suddenly a loud British cheer rings out, and a mass of brown figures appear on the hill, galloping furiously. Lance and sword catch the sun's rays in a line of flashing steel, and, with a chorus of wild demoniacal yells, the Inniskillings—for it is that gallant regiment—hurl themselves on the enemy.

There is a brief tussle, but the shock of a compact body of horsemen is too much for the scattered Uhlans. They are borne back; and thrusting, hacking, and hewing, the mixed mass of friend and foe sweeps over the road again. The Germans are presently in full flight, with the Dragoons in hot pursuit, from which, however, they are quickly summoned back by the warning call of the trumpet.

Meanwhile, what has happened to the 13th Hussars and P Battery? To ascertain, we must go back a few minutes.

Simultaneously with the advance of the Uhlans, a regiment of Cuirassiers emerges from Corbais, ascends the

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high ground towards Malplaquez, and advances at a hand-gallop along the east side of the highroad.

P Battery instantly comes into action, and aided by a machine gun, opens a rapid fire on the approaching foe. Under this the Germans swing off to their right, and sweep down into Corroy Valley in perfect order, two squadrons leading in a line, and the remainder of the regiment in a second line, a quarter of a mile behind the first and well clear of it to the right. (*"2nd position of Cuirassiers" on Map 7.*)

As the first line comes down the hill, C Squadron of the Greys hastily mount their horses, wheel round, and advance at a gallop. The second line of Germans sees them, wheels to its right, and bears down on the Greys to prevent them from attacking the flank of the leading squadrons. The Greys alter their direction slightly to meet these new opponents, there is a crash as the horsemen meet in full gallop, and in a moment a good old-fashioned hand-to-hand fight is going on.

The moment has come for the Hussars to strike. When the German cavalry first appear, the colonel holds his men in hand, waiting for an opportunity of delivering a vigorous charge. For a moment he is uncertain what is the best thing to do. To his right, long lines of Uhlans on the other side of the road are sweeping down on Malplaquez. In front of him, similar lines of Cuirassiers are galloping straight for the guns. Suddenly he sees them swing off to their right; he sees the squadron of Greys in the valley charge forward; his chance has come.

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The trumpeters sound the advance, the officers wave their swords, and the Hussars trot off. There is no infantry to meet, no rifle fire to pass through, so the regiment advances with the troopers close alongside each other—horses neck and neck, men boot to boot.

Two squadrons are extended in the first line, about one hundred and sixty yards long, the men in two ranks. About three hundred yards behind, and well clear to the right, rides the remaining squadron, its four troops in column one behind the other, forming what is known as the "2nd line." (*"2nd position of the Hussars" on Map 7.*)

The officers canter several yards in front of the squadrons. About three hundred yards in front of them, again, are the "ground scouts," so called because they gallop ahead to look out for things like sunken roads or wire fences, which might stop the regiment's advance and throw it suddenly into confusion. When they meet these obstacles, the scouts signal with waves of their arms, and indicate by gestures where they may be safely crossed, if such places can be found.

Ahead even of the "ground scouts," far out in front, and on each side of the regiment, ride "combat patrols" of three or four men, to give their comrades timely warning should an enemy suddenly appear on the flanks.

The lines of blue and drab approach within a quarter of a mile of each other, the Germans closing in on their centre from the extended order in which they at first rode. P Battery, which swung its guns round when the

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Cuirassiers changed their direction, is unable to take much advantage of this more compact formation; for before it has discharged a dozen rounds at the enemy's now solid line, the forward rush of the British cavalry prevents the gunners from firing, for fear of hitting their own men.

The pace slowly increases to a furious gallop, trumpets blare forth the "Charge!" swords flash in the sunlight, men burst into wild, hoarse cheering, and with a terrific shock of horse against horse, and clash of steel against steel, the two lines meet in full collision, galloping as hard as their steeds can lay hoof to the ground.

For a moment there is a stern hand-to-hand fight. But the British have the advantage. Not only are their horses less blown than those of their opponents, but they have a second line to come into the fight, whereas the Germans' second line is busy with the Greys.

The major of the Hussars' second line sweeps rapidly down on the struggling mass of Briton and German, checks his pace slightly, and with a wave of his arm wheels his troops to the left until they form line, thus:—

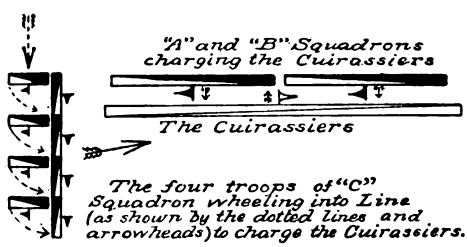
"A" and "B" Squadrons charging the Cuirassiers
The Cuirassiers
The four troops of "C" Squadron wheeling into Line (as shown by the dotted lines and arrowheads) to charge the Cuirassiers.

FIG. 26.

Then, with a cheer, the squadron gallops in on the flank

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and rear of the enemy. This decides the fight. The Cuirassiers stagger under the blow, and fighting desperately for a time, eventually scatter in full flight towards Corbais, the British after them.

But there is other work for the gallant Hussars to do. The colonel knows that his regiment is the last reserve of the British in this part of the field, and before he started on his charge he guessed that the fight would go against the handful of men on the hill to his right. So by dint of trumpet call and personal exertions on the part of his officers, he manages to withdraw his men from the pursuit. Hastily forming the first hundred troopers he can collect into an orderly body, he leads them off at a gallop towards Malplaquez, where he arrives just in time to see the Inniskillings save the sappers and Greys from annihilation by driving the disorganized mass of Uhlans away.

Shortly afterwards, the arrival of the horse artillery batteries and pom-poms from Nil Ridge decides the fate of the day. The score of Greys in Grange Farm, who have made a gallant and stubborn defence, are rescued, and their assailants driven back into the wood. By two o'clock in the afternoon the British are once more in complete possession of Malplaquez. The enemy remains in Corbais and on Nil Ridge; and although there are many slight skirmishes between the patrols of either side, no more serious fighting takes place on the 16th of July.

From the reports which he receives during the day from the officers commanding the different parts of the cavalry screen, General Douglas makes a rough calculation

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that there must be at least two German cavalry divisions —nearly 8,000 fighting men—scattered over the country in front of his own division. On reporting this to General French, the latter orders him to retire behind the Dyle at dusk. Cavalry, unlike infantry, is not easily replaced, and General French has no desire to run the risk of allowing the "eyes and ears" of his army to be used up in fighting an enemy of more than double its strength, especially as he badly wants horsemen for guarding the ends of the position, in which his army corps is intrenching itself at this moment, against surprise attacks.

At six o'clock the mounted infantry retires. The 2nd Battalion splits up into detachments, which are placed along the Dyle, to guard the bridges during the night. The 1st Battalion marches to Witterzee (*Map 8*).

At eight o'clock the horse artillery batteries retire quietly over the Dyle. An hour later, under cover of the gathering darkness, the cavalry division withdraws. The 1st Brigade goes to Witterzee, and guards the right of the British line during the night by sending out constant patrols along all the roads leading to the south and west. The 2nd Brigade retreats to Sauvagemont, behind the British infantry, where it takes a well-earned night's rest after the hard fighting of the day.

The only British cavalry regiment which has not been engaged during the day is the 14th Hussars, the three squadrons of which have been accompanying the infantry divisions to which they belong in their march from Brussels. These squadrons send out strong patrols during

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the night along all the roads leading towards the Germans. As large bodies of troops cannot advance far in the dark except along roads, these patrols will be able to give timely warning should the enemy attempt to move forward during the night.

Owing to the darkness and the skilful way in which the British carry out their retirement, the Germans remain in complete ignorance of their departure for some hours, and think they are still in the position they were in during the day. They are encouraged in this belief by the fact that their patrols frequently encounter those of the Hussars along the roads during the night.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE MARCH OF THE ARMY CORPS FROM BRUSSELS.

WHILE Lieutenant-General Douglas's cavalry, as narrated in the last three chapters, has been fighting with the enemy, the British army corps has been steadily tramping along the roads from Brussels towards the river Dyle. (*See Map 5.*)

Have you ever seen an army on the march, with its imposing procession of cavalry, artillery, infantry, engineers, and cyclists; its long train of ambulances and wagons carrying food, ammunition, and baggage? No? Then let us place ourselves where we can watch the 1st Infantry Division go past.

We will imagine that the place we have selected for our standpoint is a monument called "the Lion of Waterloo," which is nearly three miles south of the village of that name, and is almost in the centre of the famous battlefield of 1815. "The Lion" is made of the cannon captured from the French on that glorious 18th of June, and stands on the top of a huge mound of earth rising up to a height of two hundred feet, and commanding an excellent view of the country for many miles around. It is

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the highest piece of ground between Brussels and Namur, and would have made a splendid position for the British troops in the great battle had it existed then; but it did not, having been piled up since by the Belgians. For months and months swarms of workmen and wagons were employed in digging and carting from the neighbouring hills the enormous amount of earth required to build the mound. So much was moved, in fact, that men who fought at Waterloo found great difficulty in recognizing the battle-field when they revisited it in after years.

As the advanced guard of the 1st Infantry Division, according to General French's orders, passes the Vert Chasseur Inn at six o'clock, it will not reach the mound which we have chosen for our point of view of the march until nearly four hours later, for the distance between the two places is over eight miles. So we take up our position shortly before ten o'clock, and still have some time to wait.

By being so late, we miss a part of the division—namely, A squadron of the 14th Hussars, which is marching about four miles ahead of the infantry. However, this does not matter very much, for it is reconnoitring in the same way as the cavalry division does, and you have already read all about that. The squadron, in fact, makes a small "screen" of patrols of three or four men each, who search the villages, orchards, and woods on each side of the road, in case any of the enemy's scouts have succeeded in getting through our cavalry screen in front. These could not, of course, do our army any actual harm, but they would be able to count our men, and report our

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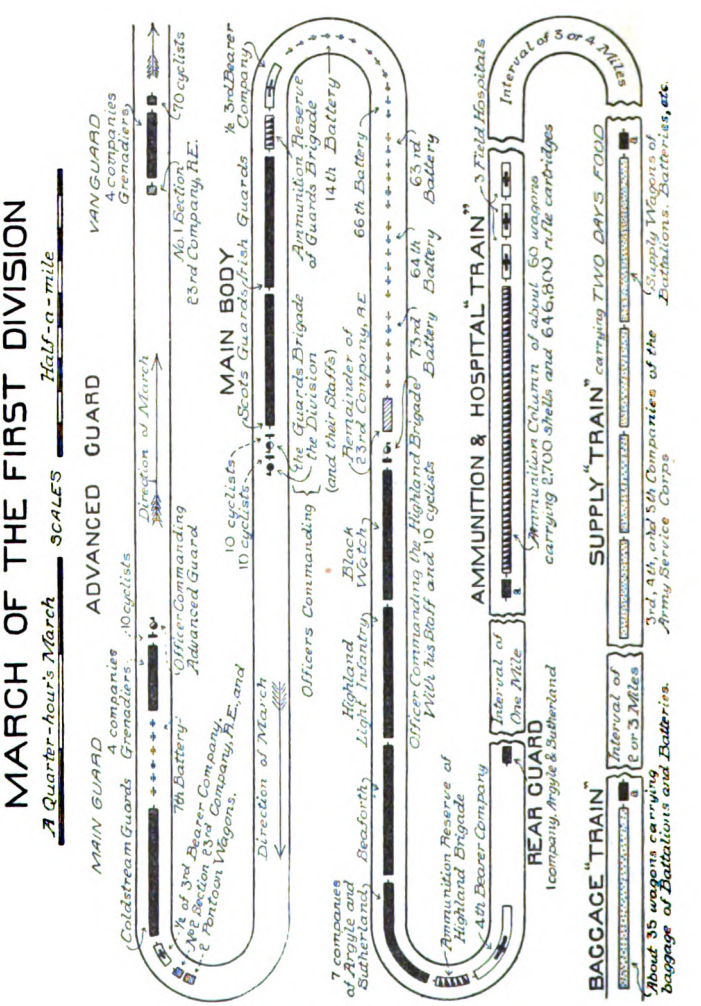

FIG. 27.—MARCH OF THE FIRST DIVISION.

In this diagram the 1st Infantry Division of General French's army corps is represented as marching along a very curly road. The road is not really curly, but has been made so in the drawing in order to get it all on one page. At the top right-hand corner of the diagram is the vanguard, marching in the direction shown by the arrow. A full description of the

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strength to the German general. It is hardly likely that a big force has got past our cavalry division unobserved; but if it has, the "divisional cavalry," as this squadron is called, will find it, and prevent it from surprising our infantry.

It is a glorious summer morning, and the sun is shining brightly on the roof of La Haie Sainte farmhouse, a quarter of a mile to the east of our position—the same farmhouse which formed the centre of the British line in the great battle, and which a German battalion defended against the attack of twenty times its number of Frenchmen. But this same bright sun has its disadvantages, for there is not a cloud in the sky, and in a couple of hours marching will be sweltry work for the British.

Towards ten o'clock we see a low thick cloud of dust rising on the road about two miles to the north, near the village of Joli Bois, and, if you have read "B.-P.'s" book on scouting, you know that that sort of cloud means infantry. The dust made by cavalry rises much higher in the air, and is much thinner; while that made by guns and wagons is in little groups of clouds. By knowing this, you can tell from several miles away what sort of a force is passing along a road; and by observing the length of the dust-clouds, you can make a pretty accurate guess at the number of men who stir them up.

whole procession—or "column," as it is called in military language—is given in this chapter. The right-hand scale at the top of the picture will show you how many miles long any particular part of the column is; the left-hand scale will show you how many hours' march behind the vanguard any other part of the column is. You will notice that after the rearguard passes, the intervals between the various parts of the "train" are so great that the road has been broken in the picture.

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When the cloud approaches nearer, we see that it is made by a small body of infantry—the vanguard of the 1st Infantry Division. (*See Fig. 27.**)

The duty of this vanguard is to help the Hussars, four miles ahead of it, when they meet the enemy.

The first men to pass us are seventy of the 26th Middlesex Rifles. This sporting volunteer battalion offered to come out with the 1st Army Corps, and its services were accepted, as there are such excellent roads for cyclists in Belgium. When we see them, they are marching four abreast, pushing their bicycles. They have been placed at the head of the vanguard, so as to be able to move off at once, if necessary, to the assistance of the cavalry. The latter are over an hour's march away for a foot soldier, but these cyclists can reach them in twenty minutes. Each man's rifle is hung by clips to his machine; otherwise he is accoutred the same as an infantryman. We notice that they look very business-like in their drab-coloured uniform, and are especially struck by their ingeniously-mounted Colt machine gun, pulled by four men on bicycles.

A little over the length of a cricket pitch behind the cyclists—the usual interval between different regiments on the march—come four companies of the Grenadiers, the same battalion that fought at Modder River. In fact, all the battalions of the 1st Division, with the exception of the Irish Guards, were with General Methuen in his march to Kimberley.

* This figure shows the exact order in which the 10,000 men and the guns and wagons of the 1st Infantry Division march. The reader will find it a useful illustration to refer to when reading the remainder of this chapter.

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The Guards are marching in "fours"—that is to say, four abreast. The men are not close alongside each other, as you see them when they are marching through the streets at home, but are a yard or more apart. This lets the men behind get more air; but even with this precaution they have a bad time. They are coated with dust, which makes their clothes more of an invisible colour than ever; but, as you can imagine, this does not strike them at the moment as being a very great advantage. If you tried to comfort one of them with the suggestion that an enemy would find great difficulty in seeing him, he would probably inform you that he "didn't want his bloomin' insides made invisible too!"

Bringing up the rear of the vanguard comes a section of the 23rd Field Company of the Royal Engineers. It consists of about thirty men, a "Tyler's cart," and a mule carrying some guncotton—an explosive used for blowing up things. The Tyler's cart is something like a field-gun carriage and limber, the place of the gun being taken by large chests carrying all sorts of tools; it is drawn by four horses in pairs, the drivers being mounted on the left-hand horses, the usual military way. The sappers are with the vanguard, so that they can destroy any obstacles, such as felled trees, with which the enemy may have barricaded the road. Thus they can prevent the march of the army from being delayed.

The vanguard takes about five minutes to go by us. After the last man has passed, we have to wait over twenty minutes before the rest of the advanced guard

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arrives, as it is marching three-quarters of a mile behind. The interval between the two parts is not entirely deserted, however, for now and then a couple of Grenadiers pass by, their rifles sloped over their shoulders, their pipes in their mouths. They are keeping connection between the vanguard and mainguard, as the two bodies into which the advanced guard is divided are called, and very glad they are to be out of the dust made by their comrades.

At last the mainguard reaches us. A few yards in front rides the colonel of the Grenadiers, who also commands the whole of the advanced guard. He is in a very responsible position, for it is usually a very difficult thing to know exactly what the advanced guard should do when it meets the enemy. On the one hand, this colonel must not allow any small parties to stop his advance; he must clear them away, so as to prevent the march of the division behind him from being delayed. On the other hand, he must be very careful how he tackles a big force; for if he becomes seriously engaged with it, the rest of the division will have to come to his rescue, and this may upset the general's plans. So you see the colonel of the Grenadiers has a difficult duty to perform—a duty which nowadays is made still more difficult by smokeless powder, for it is harder than ever to ascertain the enemy's strength if he conceals himself judiciously.

As an instance of this, imagine that the advanced guard which you see in *Fig. 27* has met the Germans. The Hussar patrols four miles ahead are stopped by a shower of bullets from an invisible enemy; the cyclists, and then

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the Grenadiers of the vanguard, come to their assistance. The Hussar scouts try to get round the place where they imagine the enemy to be, in order to find out how many of them there are. While they are doing this, the main-guard comes up. One of its battalions is extended in fighting order, and advances to attack the position where the scouts report that they have seen some of the enemy. The 7th Battery opens fire to help this battalion.

All this must be done quickly, for the division is only a mile behind the mainguard, and its march must not be delayed if possible. So the advanced guard commander has not much time in which to find out the enemy's strength. On the one hand, the Germans may consist of only one hundred men, carefully hidden behind hedges: having worried the advanced guard, and delayed its march by making it extend in fighting formation, they may mount their horses and ride away hard to avoid being captured. On the other hand, they may consist of two or three thousand men with field-guns: in trying to turn them out of their position, the advanced guard may become so seriously engaged that it will not be able to withdraw without losing heavily. The division will come to its assistance, more Germans may come up, and a big battle may be fought on a day on which, for some reason or other, the general does not wish to fight.

This is only one instance; you can imagine many others. Generally speaking, our colonel of Grenadiers will be doing his duty well if he does not allow a small force to delay his march, and, should he meet a large one,

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if he stops its advance long enough to enable the division behind him to get into fighting formation. It is in order to allow time for this that the advanced guard marches a mile or two ahead of the rest of the force.

Returning to our column on the march. Behind the colonel are some cyclists, who act as his messengers and carry orders for him. Then come the remainder of the Grenadiers and the 7th Field Battery, the drivers dismounted from their horses and the gunners from their seats on the carriages and limbers, so as to ease the teams as much as possible. After the battery march the Coldstream Guards, followed by their machine gun and carts. Behind them, again, comes No. 2 Section of the 23rd Field Company, accompanied by two pontoon wagons—big six-horsed vehicles carrying two pontoons and enough spars and planks to make a bridge over a gap twenty-five yards broad. These sappers march with the advanced guard, so that they will be at hand to repair any small bridges which the enemy may have destroyed. They will probably be able to do this before the division arrives.

Bringing up the rear of the mainguard are five ambulance wagons of the 3rd Bearer Company, to look after the wounded if an action is fought.

The mainguard takes twenty minutes to pass us, and then there is an interval of half an hour before the rest of the 1st Division arrives. The dust stirred up by the troops who have already passed us was bad enough, but it was nothing compared with the thick, suffocating cloud which now approaches us. It drifts in eddying waves

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through the ranks, obscuring the men from view, coating them from head to foot, and parching their mouths and throats. The rays of the sun, too, beat down fiercely on their heads; for it is now half-past eleven o'clock, and intensely hot. Altogether, it must be miserable work under such conditions, and it is not surprising that the division is covering only a little over two miles an hour.

Ahead of this cloud of dust rides Lieutenant-General Rundle, commanding the 1st Division, accompanied by several of the eleven officers who form his staff. The brigadier-general of the Guards Brigade follows with his aide-de-camp and brigade-major. Then comes a group of cyclist messengers, and then the Scots and Irish Guards.

Just as the leading files arrive opposite us, a bugler in each battalion in the column sounds the "halt"—"Too-o-o tah, Too-o-o tah." In a moment the long procession has stopped. The men pile arms by the side of the road, and take a short rest.

These halts are made simultaneously by the whole division for five minutes in every hour. The way in which it is managed is as follows. The officers commanding each part of the column—vanguard, mainguard, main body, and rearguard—all have their watches set to the right time. The general orders that a halt shall be made, say, at the end of every hour. The moment the hands of the watch point to the hour, each commanding officer orders his bugler to sound the halt. At four minutes past the hour, the bugler sounds a "G" as a warning note; the men fall in, and unpile arms. At five minutes

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past, the "advance" is sounded, and all parts of the column move off again at the same moment.

Sometimes—during a very long march, for instance—a halt of one hour is made to enable the men to make a light meal of the ration they carry in their haversacks. To-day, however, the division is merely going as far as Genappe, where it will encamp for the night. This is only five miles farther on, so it is thought better to get the march over, and give the men a rest for the remainder of the day.

While the division is halted, three men bicycle up to our mound, leave their machines at the foot, and climb up beside us. One of them, a corporal, scans the country to the east through his telescope; another produces a pocket-book and pencil; the third unfolds a blue and white flag attached to a stick. They are a party of signallers who are going to "open communication," as it is called, with the 2nd Division, now four miles away to the east.

"Wag, Andrew," says the corporal, and the man with the flag "wags" it to and fro.

"All right; I've got them. Give them the password now," from the corporal, and the flag waves violently. It always starts over the man's head: sometimes it is swept down almost to the ground—this is called a "dash;" at others, it only goes half-way—that is a "dot." A dash and a dot mean "A," a dash and three dots, "B," dash-dot-dash-dot, "C," etc., each letter being shown by a combination of dashes and dots.

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The corporal has caught sight of a flag waving to and fro on a hill a mile and a half to the east, and he keeps his telescope on it while the man he calls Andrew goes on signalling the pass-word, "London," again and again. The group in the distance apparently catch sight of our trio, for its flag also begins to wag violently, and the corporal, watching it, slowly spells "C-A-L-C-U-T-T-A." Now, "Calcutta" is the answering word to "London" previously arranged on, so the corporal knows that the signallers with whom he is now in communication are British.

Presently this group starts sending a message, and the man with the pocket-book writes down the words as the corporal reads them through his glasses, while Andrew is occasionally told to give the "all right" signal, or the "repeat" signal if the corporal fails to understand a word. But this he very seldom does, for he is a trained signaller; and though the little flag in the distance is perfectly meaningless to us with its bewildering and rapid succession of dots and dashes, yet the corporal seems to find it as easy to read its signals as we would a book.

Just before the column starts on its march again, a cyclist dashes out of a byroad, skims past the infantry, ringing his bell violently, dismounts beside Lieutenant-General Rundle, and hands him a letter.

The general opens it, talks earnestly with one of his staff, and sends his aides-de-camp galloping off. Presently they return, accompanied by the generals of the Guards and Highland brigades and several officers of their staffs.

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There is a brief conference; then the general mounts his horse, and, followed by his brigadiers, canters off along the road to Genappe.

Evidently there must have been something of importance in that letter to have caused this sudden activity. As a matter of fact, General Rundle has just received the news of the fall of Namur from General French, and has been ordered to intrench his division near Trou-du-Bois, so he has gone off with his brigadiers to arrange for the positions of the various troops in his command.

The column swings on again. Behind the Irish Guards we notice a long string of ammunition carts. This is called the "Brigade Ammunition Reserve," and consists of two ammunition carts from each battalion. The rest of the 3rd Bearer Company brings up the rear of the Guards Brigade.

Next come five batteries of field artillery, all veterans of the South African war. Extending along nearly three-quarters of a mile of road, they make an imposing procession, and take over twenty minutes to rumble by us. The clouds of dust stirred up by wheels and hoofs almost hide the 23rd Field Company, R.E., which follows the gunners.

Then comes the Highland Brigade, four battalions, with their machine guns, tool carts, and half their ammunition carts. The other half is with the Brigade Ammunition Reserve, which marches close on the heels of the Argyle and Sutherland. The 4th Bearer Company, which looks after the wounded of the Highland Brigade, is the last

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of the main body of the division to roll past us. Then, after an interval of a quarter of a mile, the rearguard—one company of the Argyle and Sutherland—comes trudging along. We are in a friendly country, and *advancing*, so that there is no necessity for a strong rearguard. It would be otherwise if we were retreating, and the rearguard had to keep the enemy back. At present, the duty of this company of Highlanders is more to pick up stragglers than to do anything else.

The whole of the fighting part of the division has now marched past. From the moment that the first cyclist of the vanguard passed us until the last Highlander of the rearguard arrives, two and three-quarter hours have elapsed; for the division stretches for five and a half miles along the road, counting all the intervals left between the different parts of the advanced guard and the main body.

There is still more of the division to come, however. You will remember that every battalion of infantry, squadron of cavalry, battery of artillery, and company of engineers has a certain number of wagons carrying food, stores, and baggage, which do not accompany it in battle. For instance, turn back to *Fig. 2*, page 16, the lower part of which shows the "baggage column" of a battalion. We have seen none of these wagons yet—where are they?

Our question would be answered if we thought it worth while to stay on the mound of the Lion and see the "train" of the division arrive. But it is a long way behind; and being a mere collection of horses and wagons, will not be very interesting to look at.

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If, however, you are anxious to know how the "train" is made up, look at *Fig. 27.* You will notice that it is divided into three sections. These march in different places, according to whether you expect to have any fighting during the day or not.

If you do expect fighting, then you would have them in the order shown in the figure, on account of the ammunition supply of your troops, and the wounded men, being the most important things to consider.

If you don't expect any fighting for several days, then the comfort of your men is the first consideration, and you would make your "train" move in the following order: supply section, heavy baggage section, fighting section.

When the division gets to its camping-place after a long day's march, the men are generally pretty hungry, so it is a good thing to make your food wagons follow as close behind the troops as possible. Take, for instance, the case of an infantryman. He has probably eaten all the food he carries in his haversack either at breakfast or at some time during the morning.* He can get nothing more until the supply wagons of his battalion arrive from their place in the "train."

Now, the actual length of the string of wagons in the "train" is two miles. If they are arranged as in *Fig. 27,* the supply wagons are about twelve miles behind the vanguard, so that they have a long way to go before they

* This is not a very large amount. In the next chapter you will read how every man in an army gets his food. It is issued to him in the afternoon, when he gets to camp: he eats most of it for his dinner, and puts the remainder in his haversack. This has to last him until the following afternoon.

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arrive at their battalion's camp. Our infantryman will have to wait for an hour and a half, even if the wagons trot all the way. The road will, however, probably be crowded, so he may have to wait much longer.

Now that you have seen how the 1st Division marches, and what a long distance it stretches along the road, you will understand why General French has ordered his army to go by three separate roads. If it all marched by one, it would extend over thirty miles from the tip of its van-guard to the tail of its "train"—in other words, the last man would be two days' march behind the first man.

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CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THE BRITISH ARMY CORPS IS SUPPLIED WITH FOOD.

(In this chapter we attach ourselves for a short time to the men of the Devonshire Regiment, in order to see how they camp and get their food.

The whole of the 3rd Division, to which this battalion belongs, is marching along the road from Brussels to Wavre when the order, which you have already read about, is given for the British army to take up a position to resist the advance on Brussels which it is feared the Germans will make. *Map 5* shows where the division is when its general receives the order. He is told to assemble at Maransart, so he immediately turns his vanguard to the right (as shown by the arrow-head on the map) and marches towards that village, which is about half-way between Mousty and Hougoumont.

We join the Devonshires at the moment when they are marching in rear of the 6th Brigade along a narrow, dusty lane to Maransart. To find any place mentioned in this chapter, look at *Map 8*.)

AT half-past two our adjutant, who has been sent forward to see the brigade-major, an officer of the brigadier's staff who arranges about camping-places, comes cantering down the roadside and turns in alongside the colonel, who is riding at the head of the battalion. The two confer over a map, then the adjutant salutes and disappears in the dust ahead. Half a mile farther on we come across him again, standing by his

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horse at an open gate by the wayside, a short distance to the north of Maransart (*Map 8*).

"Camp!" says a man in the leading section of fours.

"Camp!" repeats a man behind him; and "Camp!" goes joyfully down the battalion, stretching a quarter of a mile behind.

The head of the battalion turns off through the gate, and—transformation scene!—we are in a peaceful green meadow, out of the heat and turmoil of the road, the dust from which rises in a cloud over the hedge, and seems to eddy regretfully after us, as if sorry to lose some of its victims. A little farther on, separating our field from the next, runs a small brook, on the other side of which the gunners of a battery of artillery are busy unhooking their tired teams from the dust-covered limbers.

The battalion halts, in column, each company in a line, one behind another. The colonel and major dismount and chat together. The adjutant sits on his horse and reads out some orders to the battalion, pointing out, amongst other things, where the tents will be pitched, and warning the men not to bathe or wash in the water of the brook, which is to be used for drinking only. A guard is mounted by the gate, and several sentries posted in different parts of the field.

The men then pile arms, and—what a relief to get rid of them!—strip off belts and knapsacks, and lie down on the soft green grass by their rifles.

But every one is not allowed a rest, for each company has to provide a certain number of men for the different

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fatigue parties which are to prepare the camp, and, as the colour-sergeants call out their names, the owners thereof fall out in little groups on one side of the battalion.

Two cooks from each company go to the tool-cart and procure picks and spades. They then fall to and make a field kitchen by digging several narrow trenches, one for each company, in which the wood will be lighted to boil the kettles. Parties are told off to make latrines, and to get firewood at once. Others are warned to be in readiness to pitch tents, get the food from the wagons, and carry water, when the baggage column arrives.

Meanwhile the baggage columns of all the different battalions, batteries, squadrons, and engineer companies of the 3rd Division are gradually coming up to the fighting men, whom they have been following several miles in rear, as narrated in the last chapter.

The dust-cloud over the road increases in volume; there is a rumbling of heavy wheels, and a clashing and jingling of harness and chains; and, at last, our own particular wagons come rolling through the gate at a smart trot, led by our hard-worked adjutant, who has been back along the road to meet and guide them.

The 6th Brigade is the only one in the army which is provided with tents, and seven wagons for carrying those belonging to the Devonshires have been added to the baggage columns shown in *Fig. 2*, so that eleven wagons altogether draw up alongside the battalion. In an instant all is bustle and work. The tent-party unloads the tents, and starts putting them up. The water-party

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unhooks the buckets from the wagons and brings up water to the kitchen, and the cooks fetch the kettles and cooking utensils.

The ration-party, consisting of a non-commissioned officer and three men from each company, assembles round the supply wagons. Each N.C.O. informs the quartermaster how many men there are in his company, and the latter serves out a field ration and a grocery ration for each man.

The "field ration," which has to last a man for twenty-four hours, consists of one pound of meat and one and a half pounds of bread. Sometimes, when the Army Service Corps has been able to buy or capture cattle, the meat is fresh. At other times, it is salt beef; but generally it consists of a tin of preserved beef or mutton. If no bread can be baked by the field bakery of the army corps, one pound of biscuit is given instead to each man.

The "grocery ration" consists of about a quarter-pound of tea or coffee, sugar, salt, and pepper. Occasionally, when they can be got, about two pounds of vegetables are given to each man. If they cannot be procured, about a pound of vegetables which have been compressed by a patent process and sent out from home is issued.

The ration-party carries off the rations to the field kitchen, and the sergeant-cook of the battalion superintends the various company cooks as they cut up the meat and vegetables and place them in big kettles, each holding enough for twelve men, the number in a tent.

Meanwhile the wood-party has cut and brought in several bundles of firewood; but as this is generally green

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and will not light easily, the supply wagons carry a "wood ration" for each man. This is about a pound in weight, and is just enough to kindle the fire properly.

Presently the fires are spluttering and crackling in the trenches, and clouds of steam are beginning to rise from the kettles. The cooks, with coats off and bare arms, stalk about through the smoke, lifting a lid off here, putting more fuel on there, and generally watching for the critical moment when they will be able to say, "Done." (*See Fig. 28.*)

The tents are pitched, dusk is just beginning to creep up, and the fires cast a pleasant glow over the camp as the men walk in and out, placing their kits in order, cleaning their rifles, and getting their little tin mess-cans ready for the savoury stew which they can smell coming, and which they have earned so well.

While all this has been going on, the drivers of the wagons have dismounted, unhooked their teams, and groomed their horses. A party which is told off to assist them lays down the "horse-lines," by driving a row of several stout pickets well into the ground, and passing a rope along through rings in their tops. Each horse is then picketed, its halter being made fast to the rope and one of its hind heels to a "heel-peg," which is driven into the ground about a yard behind it. The drivers go off to the supply wagons and fetch a "corn ration" of twelve pounds of corn, and a "hay ration" of twelve pounds of compressed forage, for every horse. The corn is placed in a nose-bag, and part of the hay is thrown on the ground

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at each horse's head; the remainder is kept for a morning feed.

Welcome sound—the dinner bugle! A man from each tent bolts off to the kitchen, and presently returns with a

FIG. 28.—A FIELD KITCHEN.

This is the first of four pictures showing how the soldier receives his food. It represents the sixth, or last stage, in the food's journey to him. Some men are cooking at a field kitchen. A trench is dug in the ground, in which the wood is placed, and lighted. Over this, the kettles are balanced. A draught is created by making a chimney of sods at the end of the trench, and covering the portion of the trench nearest the chimney with a bank of earth. The food in the kettles is obtained from the battalion's supply wagons. (*See Fig. 29.*)

great steaming kettle of stewed beef and vegetables. The men sit in a circle outside their tents, their mess-tins are ladled full one by one, and even the professional grumbler forgets to growl at the savoury mess which he holds between his knees—except, perhaps, that it is "too beastly hot!"

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Not all of the field ration is eaten, though. Part of it must be kept, for no more food will be issued until to-morrow evening. So each man preserves a hunk of cold meat and a piece of bread or biscuit for breakfast to-morrow, and for a midday meal. This he carries in his haversack.

Besides the field ration which is given to him every day, every man—whether trooper, gunner, sapper, or private—carries in his knapsack, saddlebag, or haversack, as the case may be, an "emergency ration" in a small, sealed tin cylinder about five inches long and two and three-quarter inches in diameter. This he is not allowed to open unless in extremity, or by his officer's order. The emergency ration consists of a cake of concentrated beef and a tablet of cocoa paste. Either can be eaten dry, or can be boiled down into soup or cocoa. They are sufficient to keep a man's strength up for thirty-six hours, if he eats only a small quantity at a time.

The supply wagons of the battalion are now empty, so in the early morning they start off to refill. But where? Let us follow them and see.

Led by the young subaltern who is in charge of the baggage column—he and all his men belong to the battalion—the two wagons file out of the field and down the road. About a quarter of a mile away is the "6th Brigade Supply Column," the 10th Company of the Army Service Corps (*see Fig. 20, pages 66, 67*), with nineteen wagons, carrying a day's food for every horse and man in the

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brigade. As we approach, we are joined by the wagons of the three other battalions in our brigade, and by those of our brigade's bearer company and field hospital. They likewise are empty, and have come to refill.

In less than an hour we have stripped bare the A.S.C.

FIG. 29.—SUPPLY WAGONS.

This picture shows the fourth and fifth stages through which the soldier's food passes on its way to him. In the centre of the picture is seen one of the battalion's supply wagons with its team of four horses. Some men are loading it with boxes of food which they have obtained from the A.S.C. company, which is acting as the "supply column" of the brigade to which the battalion belongs. The wagons of this company are seen in the background. In the foreground is the lieutenant who is doing duty as the "transport officer" of the battalion. He is handing a receipt for the food he has received to the A.S.C. officer in command of the supply column. The battalion wagon will now go off to the camp of its battalion, and the supply column will return to the "supply park" for more food. (*See Fig. 30.*)

wagons of the Supply Column (*see Fig. 29*), leaving them only their stock of emergency rations, of which they carry one for each man in the brigade, in case those actually with the men have been eaten and require replacing. The regimental supply wagons, now full, return to their bat-

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talions with a day's supply of food for each man and horse.

The Supply Column of the 6th Brigade is now empty, so teams are hooked in, and off it goes to refill.

We will now, reader, desert the Devonshire Regiment, follow this 10th Company of the Army Service Corps, and see where all the food comes from.

As we jog along in rear of the Brigade Supply Column, we notice the 9th Company of the A.S.C. in a field to the right of the road, issuing supplies to the regimental wagons of the other brigade (the 5th) of our division. We observe that this company has no horses. It carries its supplies in twelve large steam motor cars. The A.S.C. began to use this kind of vehicle after the Boer War, but they had not enough of them to supply all their companies when war was declared between Britain and Germany.

A little farther on is the 11th Company A.S.C., which has just finished giving out rations to the supply wagons of the Divisional Troops of the 3rd Division. (*See Fig. 20, pages 66, 67.*) Presently this company hooks in its teams and follows us down the road. At the same moment, by other roads, the A.S.C. companies of the 1st and 2nd Divisions are marching to the rear, and also the 12th Company A.S.C., which supplies the Corps Troops with food. (*See the same figure as before.*) All told, there are ten Supply Columns marching off to refill—namely, the 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th Companies of the Army Service Corps.

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We arrive at a big common near La Hulpe Railway Station. It presents a scene, seemingly, of the utmost confusion. Over a hundred large wagons and carts are scattered over the grass. Stacks of forage rise in one place, piles of boxes and barrels in another; men keep moving about here, there, and everywhere; strings of wagons are coming and going.

Presently we notice that there really is no confusion. The wagons are all drawn up in straight lines; the men are all moving with set purpose; there is order everywhere in spite of the bustle.

This is the 1st Section of the Supply Park, which has brought up a day's food for the whole army corps from Brussels, and is now about to empty itself into the ten A.S.C. companies which form the Supply Columns.

But why is the Supply Park here? Did not General French intend to send all his food direct by rail from Brussels to the army?

He did mean to, but an accident occurred which upset this plan. One of the railway bridges over a road in Soignes Forest was blown up during the night of the 15th–16th, whether by a wandering German patrol or by some Belgian traitor was never discovered. Consequently, the army's food has to be sent by road from Brussels while the sappers are repairing the bridge. Fortunately the Supply Park was ready, and one of its three sections was dispatched with a day's food during the afternoon of the 16th.

Our company takes its turn in filling up from the Park;

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and having finished, moves on to the field bakery, a motley collection of wagons commandeered from the country, but pulled by A.S.C. horses and worked by A.S.C. officers and men. It is divided into eight sections. Each of these consists of six or seven wagons, and carries ten

FIG. 30.—THE SUPPLY PARK.

The picture shows the third stage through which the soldier's food passes on its way to him. A part of the long string of wagons, called the "supply park," is seen winding its

field ovens—little sheet-iron affairs, which are set up on the ground and covered with earth and sods. Here the men of the A.S.C. bake bread for the army, obtaining their flour from the Supply Park. Having drawn our one and a half pounds for each man, our Supply Column is now

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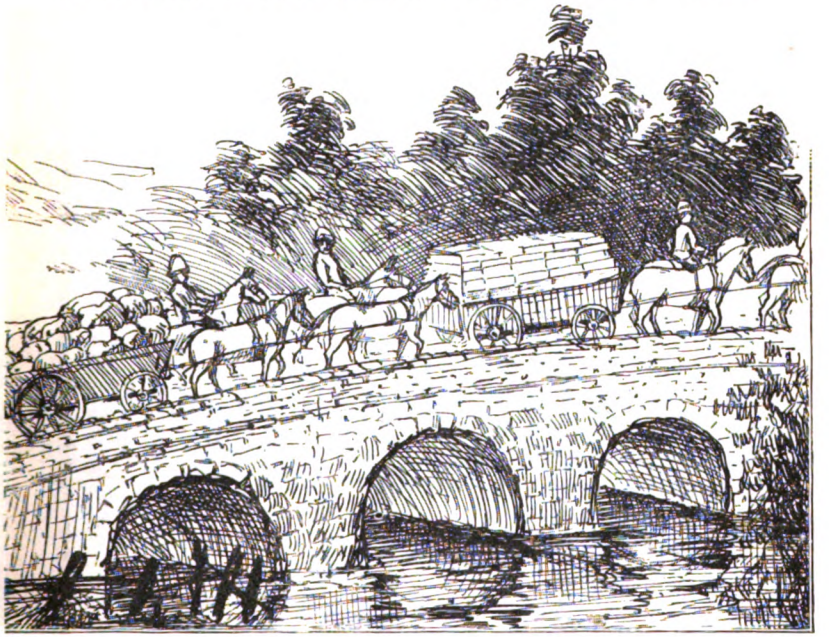
full up, and starts on its return journey to its place in rear of the 6th Brigade.

Here we will leave the 6th Brigade Supply Column, as we have found out all we wish to know about it. Let us



way along a road, bringing the food from the "advanced depôt" to "supply column," which you saw in *Fig. 29*. Note the bullocks and sheep intended for the knives of the A.S.C. butchers. Now turn to *Fig. 31*.

go off to the Supply Park and see how it, in its turn, replenishes its stores.

As we get back to the Park, the last of the Supply Columns is rolling away, and the teams of the section are being hooked in. The lines of wagons turn to the right,

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and are presently streaming down the road in a column which stretches for more than a mile, and forms a curious sight. The drivers and horses all belong to the A.S.C., but the wagons and carts have been requisitioned, commandeered, begged, borrowed, obtained in some way or other,

FIG. 31.—THE ADVANCED DEPÔT.

On the left you see men unloading a railway truck. This is the first stage through which the soldier's food passes on its way to him. The remainder of the picture shows

from the country in which we are fighting. Here you see a big brewer's dray drawn by four well-groomed A.S.C. horses, with their smart riders mounted on the near horses; there, a two-wheeled contractor's cart, pulled by two horses; in another place, a four-horsed country wagon, such as you see carting the corn from the fields at harvest time. In

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fact, all sorts and conditions of vehicles meet your eye. (*See Fig. 30.*)

We are now off to the Advanced Depôt, about six miles away near Brussels, to refill. We have not gone more than a couple of miles when we meet the Second Section of the Supply Park, which filled up from the Advanced

the second stage, or the "advanced depôt," where all the food—besides ammunition, boots, and other stores—which is brought up by the railway, is stacked until the "supply park" carts it away, as shown in *Fig. 30.*

Depôt yesterday, and is now coming up to the place we have just left, where, to-morrow morning, it will issue the day's food to the Supply Columns. At this very moment the Third Section is at the depôt, busy filling up with food for the whole of the army corps for the day *after* to-morrow.

So we now see how the army is supplied. The three

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sections of the Supply Park travel constantly to and fro between the Advanced Depôt and the army, each bringing up one day's food. With this they fill the ten Supply Columns, who in turn fill the regimental wagons of battalions, squadrons, batteries, engineer companies, bearer companies, and field hospitals.

And the Advanced Depôt—what is that?

It is a huge store of supplies at Watermael, three miles from Brussels, on the railway along which the army is advancing. It is constantly kept filled by trains coming up along the line of communications from the base (Ostend) and Ghent, where, as narrated in Chapter III., the A.S.C. have been receiving stores from England and collecting food in Belgium respectively.

But here you stop me with the remark, "Suppose there is no railway?"

There *must* be a railway! It is an absolute necessity nowadays for supplying an army. There is not only the food to be considered; there is the ammunition too. Rifles, machine guns, field-guns all fire so rapidly that an enormous weight of powder and shot is used in even a small battle. *One army corps alone wants three hundred tons of food, stores, and ammunition every day!* Think of what that means if you have a force of *ten* army corps, like the 380,000 Germans who fought the French in 1870!

If you have no railway, you will require three hundred four-horsed wagons to carry these three hundred tons. They will make an unwieldy procession three miles long, and will only be able to travel about twelve miles a day.

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So, for every six or seven miles you move away from your railway, you will want three hundred wagons, as they have to get back again to fill up.

But in civilized countries there are railways everywhere, and especially to all the important places. And it is those important places to which a big army wishes to get, as a rule. So wherever we go there are sure to be railways. If, for some reason or other, an army is compelled to leave the railway for a few days, it must then take a big supply park with it. The train of wagons, however, can be greatly diminished if the country is fertile and well populated, for then supplies can be bought from the people. If this is not possible, the park might be made smaller by taking only meat lozenges and compressed food. In fact, in this way a park might be dispensed with altogether for a week or ten days. But then there is always the long procession of wagons carrying ammunition; you cannot compress that.

It is the same for both sides—each must have a railway. As one side retreats, it takes good care to damage the railway by blowing up the bridges and destroying the tunnels. Consequently the advance of the other side is delayed, for it cannot go conveniently more than fifteen or twenty miles from its advanced depôt, which is shoved further and further forward as the sappers repair the damaged line.

Of a truth, one may well say that a modern army is tied by the leg to a railway!

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CHAPTER XV.

THE BRITISH POSITION.

(This chapter describes the position in which the infantry of the British army corps intrench themselves while the cavalry division is fighting at Malplaquez on July 16th.

Map 8 is the best one to refer to when you want to find any place mentioned in this chapter.)

ON the morning of the 17th of July, the first rays of the rising sun fall on the British army occupying an intrenched position, and awaiting the attack of the Germans.

You have probably often heard or read of an "intrenched position," and perhaps you know what is meant by the expression. However, as no two positions are exactly alike, and as you will understand better the account which follows of the great four days' battle between the German and British armies, I am going to describe the way in which General French has placed his soldiers, and how he has made them dig trenches to shelter themselves from the enemy's bullets; in other words, how he has "taken up an intrenched position."

Before doing this, I must give you a general idea of how an army is arranged for fighting when it is going

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to defend a place. The system usually adopted is to divide it into three bodies, which are called the "firing line," the "local reserves," and the "general reserve."

For example, see *Fig. 32*, in which five battalions and several batteries form the firing line, three battalions and two cavalry regiments the three local reserves, and four battalions the general reserve.

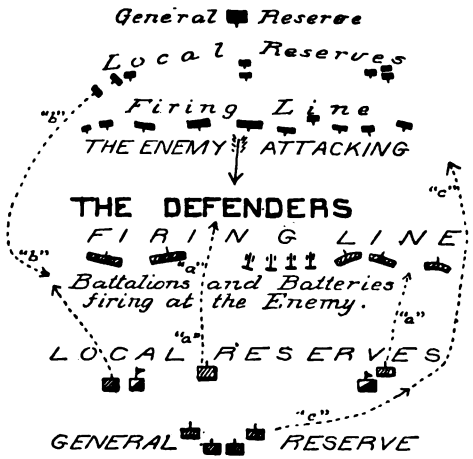

FIG. 32.—HOW ARMIES ARE ARRANGED WHEN FIGHTING.
The attackers (black) are advancing from the top against the defenders (shaded).

The firing line is placed where the general expects the enemy to attack him. The men are usually put in shelter trenches, or they defend villages and woods.

The local reserves are about half a mile or a mile behind the firing line, ready to help it if necessary. One of their duties—a very important one, too—is to make small counter-attacks. For instance, suppose that the attackers, when they get close to our firing line,

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are so discouraged by the tremendous fire we pour on them that they stop, or perhaps actually start retreating; now is the time to rush forward and charge them—in fact, to make what is called a "counter-attack." This is usually done by the local reserves, as shown by the dotted lines "*a*, *a*, *a*" in *Fig. 32*. Another duty of the local reserves is to resist the enemy, should the latter try to get round the ends of the firing line—that is to say, should he try to make a flank attack, as shown by the dotted line "*b*, *b*, *b*."

The general reserve is kept by the general in some convenient place from two to five miles behind the firing line. These troops are useful if the enemy makes some unexpected move. They can also be used to make a grand counter-attack, as shown by the dotted line "*c*, *c*."

You will notice, by the way, from *Fig. 32*, that an attacking army is also roughly divided into three parts. These are known by the same names as the three corresponding bodies of the defending army.

We will now take, first of all, a general view of the British position on the map, and afterwards an imaginary walk along the line to see how the soldiers have fortified it.

If you open *Map 8*,* you will see a river called the Dyle, which rises near the village of Promelles, and runs through Genappe to the right-hand top corner of the map. You will also see a big town called Nivelles in the left-

* Do not shut the map directly you have looked at it. Keep it open, as you will constantly want to refer to it.

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hand bottom corner. It is from Namur, which is about fifteen miles south-east of Nivelles and the Dyle, that the Germans are expected. There are, as a matter of fact, a lot of them shown in blue on the map; but remember that these have not arrived yet, for at the present moment it is only a little after four in the morning.

To stop the advance of the Germans, General French has ordered his army to take up two positions—a "real" one, which he means to defend very obstinately; and a "false" one, which he only intends to occupy temporarily, and from which he will retire when the enemy makes a strong attack on it.

First, the real position. You will see on *Map 8* a long, low range of hills running from a village called Trou-du-Bois through Flamandes to Mousty. On this, General French has placed his infantry and field artillery. The right of his line—remember the army faces south, towards the bottom of the map—is in Trou-du-Bois. It then runs through Bruyère to Botte Redoubt, where it falls back again and passes through the Au Gras Inn, Jolimont Farm, Hutte Wood, and Pallandi Wood, to Mousty, which is the left of his line.

From here the position of the Belgians begins. Only a part of it is shown on the map. They are defending the villages of Ottignies and Limal, and their line of intrenchments runs along the Dyle. As this river is unfordable below Etienne, and as all the bridges have been destroyed, the Belgian position is very strong. This is fortunate, as the allies of the British are greatly discouraged by the

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numerous defeats which their countrymen have received since the war began. Indeed, in spite of the fact that the Belgian army is 40,000 strong, it is no exaggeration to say that everything now depends on the British. It is a case of Waterloo over again.

An army in an intrenched position is exposed to very grave danger if the enemy succeeds in getting round the end of its line unobserved, and suddenly attacks it from that side. This is what is known as a "flank attack." The left of the British line is quite safe, owing to the strong position occupied by the Belgians. The right, however, is rather exposed to a flank attack if the Germans march round by Nivelles. In order to guard against this danger by obtaining timely warning of the enemy's approach, the 1st Cavalry Brigade was sent last night to Witterzee. It is still there, although not shown on the map, at four o'clock this morning, and keeps sending scouts and patrols to Thine, Nivelles, Baudemont, and Haut Ittre, to look out for the Germans.

So much for the "real position." Now for the "false" one.

Do you see Ways Ridge, which runs from Botte Redoubt close alongside the Dyle very nearly as far as Noirhat? This ridge is lower than the hills on which the British infantry is stationed, and would be an excellent place for the real position but for one thing. If the enemy were on Thyle Ridge, near the village of Noirhat, he would be able to see right along the British trenches if they were placed on Ways Ridge, as the latter is the

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lower of the two. Also, by placing some heavy guns there, he would be able to fire along the British line. This sort of fire—"enfilade fire," it is called—is the most deadly of all kinds, and would cause very severe losses. Consequently, Ways Ridge is not a very good place to defend for any length of time.

It has not, however, been neglected. The 2nd Cavalry Brigade has been placed along it, and the hills at each end have also been occupied. In fact, Ways Ridge is the "false position."

You can easily find this false position on the map. It is occupied entirely by cavalry, horse artillery, and pom-poms, and extends from Lannoy to that hill sticking out between Promelles and Genappe. It then runs along Ways Ridge, and across to La Motte Wood. The defenders are dismounted, with their horses behind the hill, and are scattered about, making as great a show as possible, so as to give the enemy's scouts the idea that they are a strong force. The object of this is to deceive the German general, and make him think that Ways Ridge is the real position of the British. The result of this plan you will see later.

In front of the false position, the 2nd Battalion of Mounted Infantry is occupying the villages which lie along the Dyle between Fonteny and Noirhat. The sappers of the 1st Field Troop have destroyed all the bridges (marked with red on the map), except one at each village. These are kept for the retreat of some of the cavalry scouts who are still across the river

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looking out for the enemy; but they are prepared for demolition with charges of guncotton, so that the mounted infantrymen in the villages can blow them up if they are forced to retire. (*See Fig. 33.*)

The colonel of the 2nd M.I. has been ordered to hold on to the villages as long as possible, but not to risk capture. When he does retreat, the Germans will be prevented from pursuing by the fire of the cavalry on the ridge. These, again, have been ordered not to risk

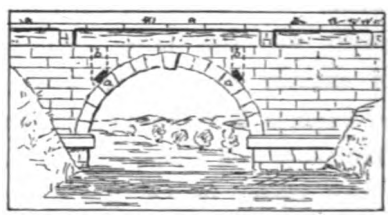

FIG. 33.—DESTROYING A BRIDGE.

This is a stone bridge with a high wall on each side, over which you can just see the heads of men and horses on the march. Two trenches (*b*, *b*) are dug across the roadway of the bridge. At the bottom of these are placed charges of guncotton (*a*, *a*). You can fire these either with a fuse—one end of which you light, and which burns long enough to enable you to get safely out of the way—or by electricity. You get the electricity by means of a "field dynamo"—a machine carried by all companies of Royal Engineers in a small wooden box.

capture or heavy loss, as General French does not wish to exhaust his cavalrymen by making them fight against infantry. If they can hold out until night, well and good; if they cannot, they must retreat behind the British infantry, and let them bear the brunt of the attack.

Having taken a general view of the two positions, let us now see where the different regiments have been placed.

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The real position is nearly eight miles long, from Trou-du-Bois on the right to Mousty on the left. (Neither Napoleon's Wood nor Newcourt Farm is occupied as yet by the British. The troops which are shown in those places on the map do not move there until later in the day, as you will presently see.)

The position is divided into four sections, each of which is defended by a brigade. Also, according to the usual custom explained at the beginning of the chapter, the army is arranged in three bodies.

The Guards Brigade occupies the section from Trou-du-Bois to some cottages about a quarter of a mile south of Bruyère. Its brigadier has placed the Coldstreams, Scots, and Irish in the firing line, and the Grenadiers in the local reserve. General French has sent the Royal West Kent to strengthen this local reserve, and has also ordered the 13th Hussars to join it when they retire from the false position in front.

The brigade of Highlanders defends the ridge from Botte Redoubt to Jolimont Farm. The firing line is formed by the Black Watch, Highland Light Infantry, and Seaforth Highlanders. The local reserve is at Flamandes, and consists of half a battalion of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders. At first sight it seems rather weak; but as the Scots Greys have been ordered to assemble at Flamandes when they retreat from the false position, it will then be quite strong enough. The other half of the A. and S. is garrisoning Glabais as an advanced post, from which it can easily retreat, if

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necessary, protected by the fire of the Highlanders on the hills behind the village.

The men of the Irish Brigade have a very important section of the position to defend, facing two large woods which will conceal the enemy until he gets within a quarter of a mile of their trenches. As this place will probably be the scene of some tough fighting when the cavalry retire from Ways Ridge, I will describe to you more fully later on how the Irishmen have prepared for the struggle. The brigadier has placed all his battalions in the firing line. The local reserve is near Sauvagemont, and at present consists of the King's Royal Rifles. This battalion is only sent there until the Inniskilling Dragoons and the 2nd M.I. retire from the Dyle, when they will form the local reserve of the Irish Brigade.

The Fusilier Brigade has prepared the hedges and garden walls around Mousty for defence. The Royal, Royal Scots, and Royal Welsh Fusiliers are in the firing line, and the Royal Irish Fusiliers in the local reserve at Moriansart Chateau, where the 1st Dragoons will reinforce them after leaving the false position.

From the foregoing, you will understand how General French forms his firing line and local reserves. His general reserve consists of the 5th and 6th Brigades, and is stationed at Maransart, from which it can move quickly by several roads to any part of the position which is very seriously threatened by the enemy.

The places where the British artillery batteries have been put are shown on the map. These points have

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been very carefully chosen, in order to get as great an effect as possible from the fire of the guns. The 4·7-inch guns—"four-point-sevens"—can hit the enemy when he is five miles away, so they are placed where the gunners can see the country best for that distance in front of the position. The 15-pounders of the field batteries shoot well up to a range of two and a half miles, so they have the next choice of place. The 5-inch howitzers are posted opposite any hill or wood behind which the enemy can conceal himself, as their shells descend at such a very sharp angle.*

The positions of the various batteries are, however, by no means permanently fixed. You have already seen how helpless artillerymen are if the enemy's riflemen can see them from three-quarters of a mile away. So, although all the guns are concealed from view as carefully as possible, it is highly probable that the German infantrymen will find out where a good many of them are when they advance close to the British line. In case this should happen, the artillery officers have noted certain places to which they can move their guns and reopen fire.

Perhaps you may notice that one or two of the batteries are not pointing straight towards the enemy. For instance, take the two 4·7 guns of the 101st Heavy Battery near Botte Redoubt. They are in such a position that they can sweep Ways Ridge from end to end if the

* The difference between a howitzer and a field-gun was explained on page 41.

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enemy tries to cross it. Again, the 42nd Field Battery at Jolimont Farm is placed so that it can pour a heavy fire of shrapnel shells on any Germans who try to cross the little Cal in front of Hutte Wood. The direction in which any gun is firing can, of course, be quickly changed if necessary.

So much for the infantry and artillery of the army. What has become of the rest—all the engineers, ammunition columns, Army Service Corps companies, bearer companies, and field hospitals which are shown in *Fig. 20*?

The engineers will have a chapter to themselves later on. It is sufficient for the present to say that the four field companies are helping the infantry to throw up fortifications, or are engaged in making entanglements, clearing away trees, blowing up houses that interfere with the British fire, and making temporary roads through fences and hedges, so that the troops may move about rapidly from one part of the position to another. All the sappers are available for fighting. During a battle the field companies place themselves with the local reserves, whence they can quickly move to any part of the position, either to work or to fight.

I have already described the work of the A.S.C. In a future chapter I am going to tell you all about the bearer companies and field hospitals, and the ammunition park and columns, and show you how they look after the wounded and supply the men with ammunition.

Although all the trenches are made at this early hour, they are only occupied by a few guards and

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sentries. The Germans are still some distance away, and the vedettes (that is, mounted sentries) of the British cavalry are watching the front and flanks of the army, so that there is no necessity for all the garrisons of the trenches to be in them yet. The men had a hard day's work yesterday, marching all the morning, and fortifying the position in the afternoon and evening, so they are very glad at not having to turn out extra early. At present they are engaged in cooking their breakfasts in the various villages and bivouacs where they are quartered, and from which they can quickly reach their trenches when the alarm is given. Take the case of the Irish Brigade, for instance. The Inniskilling Fusiliers are billeted in South Hutte, the Irish Rifles in North Hutte, the Dublin Fusiliers are in bivouacs behind Hutte Wood, and the Connaught Rangers in Pallandi Wood.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE GUARDS FORTIFY TROU-DU-BOIS.

(In this chapter we pay a visit to Trou-du-Bois, to see the intrenchments made by the Guards Brigade.

Open *Map 8* and find Bois Hill on it. Then imagine that we have placed ourselves on the top of that hill, in order to see what sort of country the Germans will have to advance over if they attack the place. Keep the map open, so that you can glance at it when the name of any village or hill is mentioned.)

IT is just eight o'clock on the morning of the 17th of July, the day after the cavalry battle at Corroy, when we reach the summit of Bois Hill. From here we obtain an excellent view of the surrounding country, for, with the exception of the Lion of Waterloo, the piece of ground we are now on is the highest for many miles around Trou-du-Bois.

Away to our left—to the east, that is—runs the long, low range of hills on which the British army is intrenched. We cannot see far in this direction, for our view is stopped by a hill in Bruyère almost as high as the one we are on.

In front the ground slopes very gently from Trou-du-Bois to the village of Promelles, one and a half miles away, where we catch an occasional glimpse of drab-clad

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figures moving from house to house. These are the men of B Squadron of the 13th Hussars, who, with two guns of P Battery, are posted in the village as part of the "false position" described in the last chapter. Behind the houses we can see groups of horses, ready saddled and bridled to take Hussars and guns away to a place of safety if the enemy makes too strong an attack on them.

Straight to our south runs a low ridge separating the Thiner and Dyle rivers, and joining Bois Hill to some high ground nearly three miles away (on the bottom edge of *Map 8*). A railway crosses this ridge through a deep cutting about one and a half miles from us. Here A Squadron of the 13th, with two guns of P Battery, forms the right of the "false position."

A large farmhouse—Lannoy—lies between us and the cutting. It strikes us as being rather a good place for the enemy to take shelter in and fire at our men.

"Why don't the sappers blow that place up?" we ask a young artilleryman standing near us, busy sweeping the country with his telescope. He laughs.

"There is no need to; we can do that when the enemy gets inside. One of those beauties," and he points to two 4·7's snugly intrenched behind a hedge a few yards away, "won't leave much of that house standing after it has put a couple of lyddite shells in it!"

This strikes us forcibly as being an excellent way of "killing two birds with one stone," as the old saying goes.

Now and then we catch sight of the blue-clad figure

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of a German scout in the distance; and once a horse artillery battery trots smartly along the road leading past Thine towards Nivelles. The guns of P Battery in the cutting bark sharply at it for a minute, and with a deafening "bang" one of the 4·7's near us sends a shell hurtling through the air.

We watch anxiously through our field-glasses for the burst. Ah! there it is—a flash, and then a ball of yellow smoke quite close to the German gunners. Has the shell hit them?

"No," says the artilleryman with the telescope; "it's about two hundred and fifty yards short—a bad shot!"

Now the range is nearly three miles, and 200 yards is not much to miss by in 5,000. We say so.

"Ah, but it *was* a bad shot," replies the gunner. "If it had fallen ahead of them or behind them, there might have been some excuse, as they are moving pretty fast. But we took the range of that road yesterday afternoon, and should not have dropped one short."

He means that they measured the distance between the road and the 4·7 by means of a range-finder. However, the other gun of the pair sends forth a shell just as he finishes his remark, and meets with better success. Another ball of yellow smoke rises, this time seemingly out of the very end of the battery, and is immediately followed by vivid flashes and a great gray cloud. A muffled roar falls on our ears.

"Good shot!" exclaims the young artilleryman, following the battery, now at full speed, with his telescope

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"One, two, three, four, five—by George, only five guns! That must have hit the last gun and exploded the ammunition in the limber."

It looks as if he were right. If so, the men and horses must have been completely blown away—the gun and its team have been wiped out as clean as you can sponge a slate.

The remainder of the battery disappears over the hill near Nivelles, a big town three and a half miles to the south-west of our position. Half-way between us and it lies a small village called Baulers, but we can only see a part of it. The remainder is concealed by a small spur jutting out from the ridge joining Trou-du-Bois to some hills to the westward.

The land between Trou-du-Bois and Nivelles is different from the rest of the country in front of the British position, as the whole of the valley of the Thiner is covered with orchards, gardens, and hedges. This gives the Germans a great advantage here, for it enables them to approach under cover to within three-quarters of a mile of the Guards' trenches. With the exception of Hutte Wood, the remainder of the British position, on the other hand, has nothing in front of it but open fields without hedges or fences. As at Nil Ridge and Malplaquez, the only cover available for attacking troops consists of occasional patches of long grass, sunken roads, and undulations of the ground.

About one and a half miles to our north-west is Witterzee, where the 1st M.I. is temporarily stationed. On a

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hill to our north lies Newcourt Farm; and near it, on a higher part of the hill, is Napoleon's Wood, so called on account of its having been used by the great emperor as a point from which to watch the progress of the Battle of Waterloo.

We can see several patrols of the Carabiniers moving about these places, looking out for the enemy's scouts. The sound of distant firing away to the westward occasionally falls on our ears. It is evident that the German cavalry is trying to get round by our right flank—probably by Baudemont and Seigneur, for the noise comes from that direction — and has come into contact with our 1st Cavalry Brigade.

There are also frequent bursts of firing to the south-west and along the front of the "false position." These are called forth by daring German patrols and scouts, who, in trying to find out for their commander-in-chief where our army is posted, are continually coming into collision with our cavalry and mounted infantry.

It is now nearly nine o'clock. Having completed our survey of the surrounding country, we descend from Bois Hill with the intention of taking a walk around the Guards' intrenchments.

(You can now shut *Map 8*. Open *Map 9*, and imagine that we are walking around the trenches which are shown on it. This map has been enlarged to about four times the scale of *Map 8*, in order to allow the smaller details of the fortifications to be shown. Keep one finger or a slip of paper in this map, so that you will not have the worry of looking for it when you want to refer to it.)

After a walk of half a mile through the large orchards

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of Ellencourt Farm, we come to the right of the position. Here A Company of the Coldstreams has dug a shelter trench behind a hedge (*Fig. 34*), through which the men can fire hidden from the enemy's view. This trench is made facing towards the north-west, in order to repulse the Germans if they make a flank attack on the British

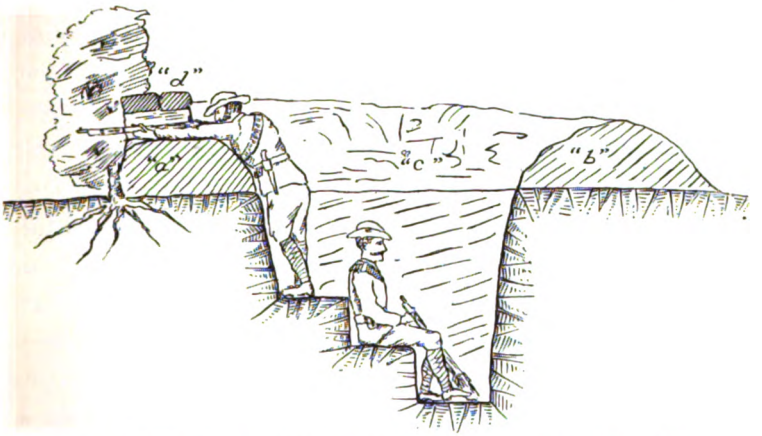

FIG. 34.—THE TRENCH MADE BY A COMPANY OF THE COLDSTREAMS.

In the drawing the trench has been cut through vertically to show how it is made. "*a*" is the parapet piled up behind the hedge to protect the firer, who is shooting through a loophole ("*d*") made of bags of earth. "*b*" is the bank of earth thrown up behind the trench to protect the men from the "back blast" of howitzer high-explosive shells, for when these shells burst, their effect is felt as severely behind them as in front. "*c*" is the bank of earth at the end of the trench to protect the men from enfilade fire.

position from Witterzee. The men are, therefore, as you will see from the map, rather exposed to the danger of being hit by bullets or shells coming from their left. They are, in fact, exposed to "enfilade fire," as fire is called when it is directed along a line of men. The parapet in front is not much protection against this sort of fire, so, instead of

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digging one long trench, A Company has made five short trenches in a line, ten yards apart, and each about thirty yards long. Banks of earth have been piled up round the ends to keep out the enfilading bullets.

These trenches took the men about four hours to make yesterday evening. This morning, after a good night's rest, they are busy cutting smaller trenches to join all the large ones together. They can do this without betraying their position to the German scouts, should any be about, for the hedge conceals them from view.

Each of the thirty-yard trenches is garrisoned by about twenty men. When the enemy first appears, twelve or thirteen of these men will stand on the front step and fire over the parapet; while the remainder sit in the bottom of the trench, ready to replace their comrades if they are hit, or to join them if their fire proves insufficient to stop the advancing foe.

B and C Companies have intrenched themselves in a similar way to A. Half of C has fortified the Angel Inn, with the assistance of some sappers of the 23rd Field Company, which is the Royal Engineer company belonging to the 1st Division.

The colonel of the Coldstreams was rather doubtful at first as to whether he ought to defend this inn or blow it up. It stands on the top of the hill, and will be a conspicuous target for the enemy's guns if he tries to attack the Guards from the direction of Witterzee. His artillery batteries will probably, as is the general custom, bombard the British trenches for several hours before (and while)

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his infantry advances to the attack. Consequently, they will make the inn a very hot place for the Guards to defend, if their scouts find out, as they probably will, that a garrison has been placed in it.

However, as the Angel is a strong, stone building, the colonel has ordered the captain of C Company to prepare it for defence, and to keep his men in the small wood behind until the German artillery stops firing. This it will have to do when the German infantry approaches to within four hundred yards of our line. This will just give our men time to rush into the inn and barricade the doors. It will then be very difficult for the enemy to capture the place—unless it has been badly damaged by their shells—for even a thin stone or brick wall will keep out rifle bullets.

Fig. 35 shows how the inn has been prepared for defence. Doors and windows have been barricaded, and loopholes made in the walls by knocking out bricks. The staircase has been pulled down and replaced by a ladder, which can be dragged up into the upper hall if the Germans succeed in getting into the ground floor. The entrance nearest the wood has been left so that the defenders can get in and out; but a number of flour-sacks filled with earth have been placed near it, ready for piling against the door from the inside.

The rooms on the left in the picture are on the side of the house which is exposed to the enemy's artillery fire, so more preparations have been made there than on the right. The German shells will probably knock down the wall in

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several places, and make such large gaps that the enemy may be able to force their way in. In case this happens, the sappers have made some loopholes in the wall of the hall, so that the Guardsmen can fire into the rooms. Sacks of earth are also placed in the hall, ready to pile against the doors.

You may ask, though, "What if the shells also blow

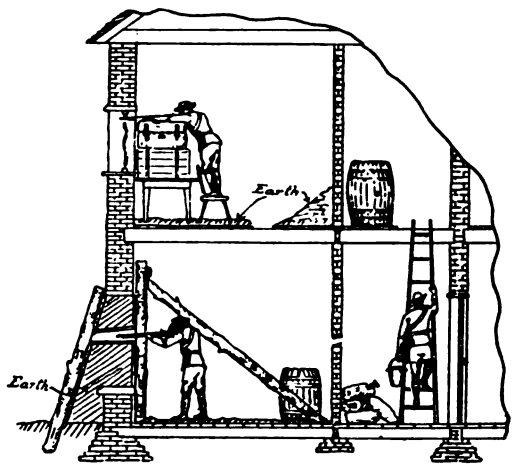

FIG. 35.—A FORTIFIED HOUSE.

How C Company of the Coldstreams prepares the side of the Angel Inn nearest the enemy for defence.

holes in the wall of the hall?" The only answer to this is, that it cannot be helped if they do. A house, anyway, is a bad place to defend if the enemy's artillery can fire at it.

As a matter of fact, the shell of a field-gun generally explodes as, or just after, it passes through the outside wall of a building. It then showers its shrapnel bullets

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against the inner walls, and no harm is done unless some one is in the room. Troops in the back rooms of a house are fairly safe from shrapnel. It is a different matter, though, if the shell is filled with lyddite or some similar high explosive. Then, the whole house will soon be blown to pieces.

You will notice that the men in the top story have made holes in the floor, so that they can fire into the lower rooms if the Germans succeed in entering the inn. Boxes, sacks, and portmanteaus filled with earth have been piled in front of the windows; blankets, with slits cut in them for firing through, have been hung up to screen the defenders from the enemy's view; and the glass has all been removed. The floors have been covered with wet earth, to lessen the chances of a conflagration, and piles of it for throwing on the flames have been placed in the corners. Casks or buckets of water are also put in each room, some for this purpose and some for drinking.

The hedge around the Angel's garden has been cut down and tied with wire to some strong sticks driven firmly into the ground. More wire is then entangled through the branches, and the result is a very difficult obstacle for the enemy to get through. It will not stop them altogether, but it will delay them long enough for the Guardsmen in the inn and trenches to pour a murderous fire on them at point-blank range.

Continuing our walk, we find D Company of the Coldstreams in a deep hollow road, which they have prepared as shown in *Fig. 36*. They have cut steps in the side of

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the cutting nearest the enemy, so that they can stand and fire over the edge of the bank. A field of tall, thick grass in front of the road has been trampled down by a dozen men forming a line and walking to and fro, as it would prevent the defenders from seeing the enemy. A narrow belt, just thin enough for the Guardsmen to see through, has been left standing to conceal the sand-bag loopholes which have been made along the front of the improvised trench. There are seventy of these loopholes, which are built to protect the heads of the seventy men firing. The remainder of the company are known as the support, and sit on the bottom step, ready to reinforce or replace their comrades if necessary.

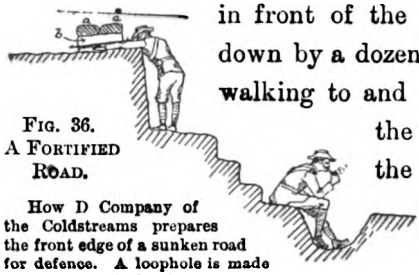

FIG. 36. A FORTIFIED ROAD.

How D Company of the Coldstreams prepares the front edge of a sunken road for defence. A loophole is made for each man's head out of bags filled with earth. These bags are about 20 inches long by 10 inches wide by 5 inches thick. Two bags (*a*, *a*) are laid on their flat sides across the top of two bags (*b*, *b*) placed on their long edges a little distance apart, so that the man can fire between them as shown.

Next to D we find E Company, intrenched behind a hedge in almost exactly the same way as are A and B. Stretched in front of D and E Companies is a line of wire entanglement about a foot high, ten yards wide, and four hundred yards long (*see Fig. 37*). (This entanglement is shown on *Map 9* by blue lines.) H Company of the Coldstreams, helped by some sappers,

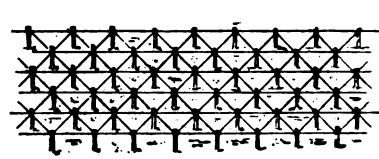

FIG. 37.—LOW WIRE ENTANGLEMENT. Made by the Coldstreams.

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were working at this from six o'clock to ten yesterday evening. They had to cut the stakes from some wooden fences near the village, sharpen the ends, drive them about two feet into the ground, and then twist over seven miles of wire from top to top.

Seven miles of wire! Where on earth did they get that from? The sappers, of course. Fortifying positions is the special job of their field companies. The major of the 23rd, knowing that a very large quantity of wire would be required, commandeered a horse and wagon from Ellencourt Farm yesterday, and sent them galloping off to Nivelles with half a dozen sappers, with orders to bring as much as they could lay hands on. They were back in a couple of hours with over forty miles of good, stout wire. In the meantime, H Company had got most of the stakes prepared and driven into the ground. It was fortunate, by the way, that those sappers discovered a large ironmonger's shop in Nivelles, otherwise the telegraph lines between the town and the south might have suffered!

It does not sound a very formidable obstacle—an entanglement only one foot high. But the Germans will find it no trifle if they try to rush our trenches, for it has been cunningly concealed by long grass pulled and trampled over it. At night it serves another useful purpose; for the Coldstreams, remembering their experiences in South Africa, have adopted the "slim" Boer trick of tying old tin cans here and there, the noise of which will betray the enemy if they try to sneak across in the dark.

Even in broad daylight, and when unconcealed by grass,

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a "low wire entanglement," as this is called, is a difficult obstacle to cross. You are bound to come a cropper if you run; the only thing to do is to walk slowly and carefully. Now this is exactly what the Coldstreams want the Germans to do—that is, to advance slowly while they empty their machine guns and magazines on them from their trenches a hundred yards away.

Leaving E Company, which forms the left of the Coldstreams' line, we walk to Ellencourt Farm, a very large and strongly-built house, concealed from the view of the enemy by Bois Hill and the surrounding orchards. F Company has fortified and garrisoned the farm in much the same way as the "Angel." As it is not exposed to the German artillery fire, it forms a very valuable rallying-point for the Coldstreams, should they be driven out of their trenches.

G and H Companies are near the farmhouse. They form a small battalion reserve,* which can quickly march to the help of any of the other companies. They will be useful here if the enemy tries to get round the end of A's shelter trench. Not that there is much chance of that, for the 63rd Battery is placed near North Bruyère, and is able to sweep the ground over which the Germans would first have to march.

A machine gun is very quickly rendered useless by a shell, so the Coldstreams' Maxim has been placed behind the chapel near Ellencourt Farm, where it will be shel-

* This is not the same thing as the "local reserve" which you read about on page 221. The "battalion reserve" is really a part of the firing line there described.

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tered from the bombardment which the Germans will probably direct against the British position before their infantry advance to attack it. The sergeant and four men who work the Maxim are ready, when the enemy's guns stop firing, to pull it to any part of the intrenchments where it will prove of the greatest value.

The last thing we notice about the Coldstreams' arrangements is the ease with which one can travel about their line without exposing oneself to the enemy's view. Temporary roads have been made through hedges, walls, and orchards, leading to every trench from Ellencourt Farm, so that the different companies can advance or retire quickly and without loss.

The farm, by the way, has been made the headquarters of Brigadier-General Carey, commanding the Guards Brigade. The Coldstreams themselves sleep in bivouacs in the orchard around the farm-building.

We now leave the Coldstreams, confident that they will make it very difficult for the Germans to turn them out of their trenches, and direct our steps towards Trou-du-Bois. On our way we notice that the guns of the 64th Field Battery are protected by banks of earth thrown up about twenty yards behind a hedge which conceals them from the enemy's view. Some of the ammunition wagons are close behind them, also sheltered by banks, while the horses and limbers have been sent off to Ellencourt Farm.

The 4·7's have been similarly intrenched, and have a splendid view of the surrounding country from the slopes of Bois Hill.

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A gap has been left in front of the 64th Battery, as the road is too near the guns to allow of infantry being placed along it. The machine gun of the Grenadiers, which at the present moment is with that of the Coldstreams near the chapel, has been given the special duty of defending this gap if the enemy tries to get through it. To make it still safer, a very formidable belt of wire entanglement, four feet high and ten yards broad, has been constructed about two hundred yards in front of the 64th Battery.

"Hallo! what on earth are they doing there?"

This exclamation is drawn from you by the sight of a line of gunners, three or four feet apart, busy passing buckets of water from hand to hand from the orchard to the position occupied by the battery. Here a couple of men seize and empty them on the ground under and around the guns.

It looks as if the gunners were trying, by watering the Belgian farmer's grass, to make up for the damage they have done to his field. As a matter of fact, the weather is very dry, and the discharge of the guns would raise a cloud of dust which would betray their position to the enemy. The artillerymen are guarding against this by passing up water from the well in Ellencourt orchard.

The position occupied by the Scots Guards does not differ very materially from that held by the Coldstreams, except that E and F Companies have prepared several of the houses in the village for defence. The men forming the garrison of each house have dug a shelter trench in the garden near it to protect themselves from shrapnel bullets and the

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splinters of bursting shells. They will remain here until the enemy's infantry gets so close that his artillery will have to stop firing. Then they will rush into the houses, repair any damage done by shells, if there is time, and cover the retreat of the men in the trenches should they be driven back.

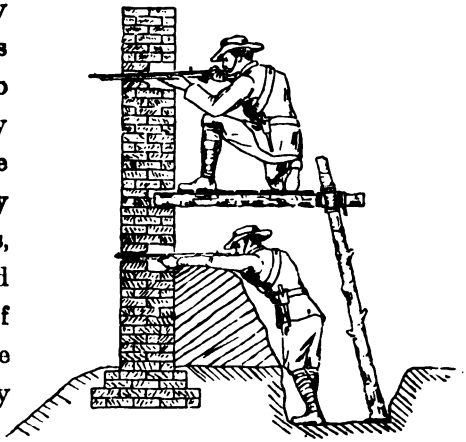

FIG. 38.—A FORTIFIED WALL.
How B Company of the Scots Guards prepare a garden wall for defence.

There is, however, one thing we admire particularly about the Scots' defence, and that is the way in which B Company have fortified a thick wall nearly ten feet high which shuts in the orchard at the west end of the village. (*See Fig. 38.*) A house outside this wall which interferes with the defenders' fire has been blown up by the sappers in the way shown in *Fig. 39.*

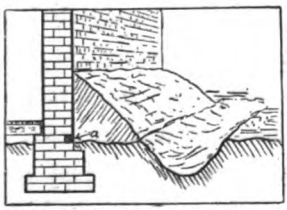

FIG. 39.—DESTROYING A HOUSE.
How the sappers destroy a house which interferes with the fire of the men defending the wall. A groove is cut along the foot of the wall—on the outside of the house. In it is placed gunpowder (*a*). Then earth is piled up, and the powder fired by means of a fuse, or by electricity, as in the case of *Fig. 38.* The wall is cut through, and tumbles down.

Leaving Trou-du-Bois, we walk along a hollow road which leads to South Bruyère, and runs along the top of the hill on which both villages lie. At first

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sight this road looks as if it would be a capital place for a couple of companies to defend; but we find that when we are standing in it we cannot see any of the ground near Bois Farm. This is because we are too far back on the top of the hill to see its southern slopes.

It is for this reason that the Irish Guards have been placed down the hill, as shown on the map. A and B Companies have fortified Bois Farm and its orchard, where the trees and hedges hide them from the enemy; but the men of C Company had to resort to a cunning device in order to conceal their trench, which lies in a large turnip field. They have saved all the green, bushy-topped turnips growing where they were digging, and then planted them on the top of the bank of earth on each side of the trench. (*See Fig. 40.*) So well have they done this that the enemy will be very clever indeed if he guesses that in this apparently innocent-looking turnip field lies a snug shelter containing one hundred deadly rifles. C Company's trench is rather ingenious, and it will be worth our while to see how they made it. To do this we must go back a little.

We last saw the Irish Guards, you remember, just before twelve o'clock yesterday, when they were marching past "the Lion" in the ranks of the 1st Division. The battalion arrived in its camping-place at South Bruyère at about half-past one, with orders from the brigadier to commence fortifying the position as soon as possible. The men had, however, just completed a thirteen-mile march on a very hot dusty day, so the colonel gave them one and a half hour's rest. Also, as there was no prospect of

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the supply wagons arriving during that time, he gave them permission to eat half the emergency ration which each man carries in his haversack.

While the men were resting, the colonel inspected the piece of ground which was allotted to his battalion to defend, and pointed out to his captains the stations of their respective companies. Half a section of the 23rd Field Company, R.E., was placed under his orders, to assist in fortifying the place.

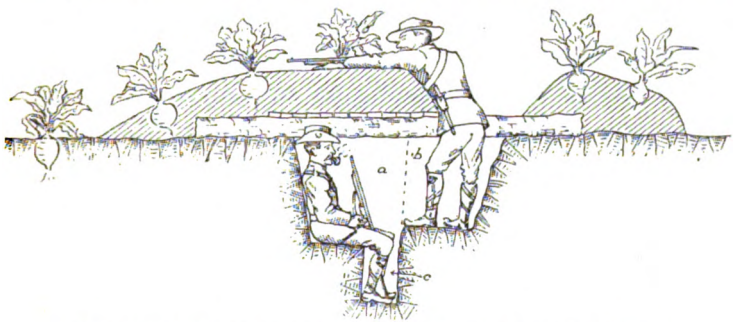

FIG. 40.—A COMBINED SHELTER TRENCH AND SPLINTER PROOF.

The trench made by C Company of the Irish Guards near Bois Farm. It is partly roofed over in order to keep out shrapnel bullets and shell splinters. Seventy-five men stand on the back step, about three yards apart, and fire at the enemy. The other twenty-five men sit under cover. They are called the "support."

The result was that, when C Company paraded after their dinner and marched down to Bois Farm, they found that their captain had selected the position of their trench, and that a couple of sappers had marked it by pegging a broad white tape to the ground. This tape was nearly six hundred feet in length, and the men were placed along it six feet apart. They then unslung their shovels and picks from their belts, placed their rifles on the ground behind them, and set to work at half-past three. By seven o'clock

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they had completed the piece of trench marked "*a*" in *Fig. 40*. They were then relieved by G Company, which in the meantime had had a good long rest. By 8.30 G had dug the piece of trench marked "*b*."

Meanwhile, the men of H Company, who began work at 3.30, had knocked down two wooden sheds in the village, and collected therefrom about three hundred planks and one hundred beams and poles. These they carried down and placed alongside the trench. Consequently, when G Company finished digging at half-past eight, they found plenty of wood handy for making a roof to keep out bullets. They placed the beams across the trench at intervals. Along the front part of these they laid the planks. (*See Fig. 40.*) Then, seizing their shovels again, they piled the earth which they had thrown out of their trench on the top of the wooden roof thus constructed. It was dark by the time they finished this, but there still remained the finishing touch—the turnips. At last they were all planted, with their bushy tops standing well up on the banks. The men resumed their arms just as ten o'clock came chiming up the valley from Promelles, and tramped off to Bruyère to enjoy a well-earned night's rest. A corporal and ten men of C Company kept guard over the trench during the night.

The part of the trench marked "*c*" was dug this morning, and the earth scattered among the turnips.

There is one thing that strikes us about the position of the Irish Guards: it is twelve hundred yards from Bois Farm to Bruyère Cottage—nearly three-quarters of a mile.

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This seems rather too long for five companies to defend. A few years ago it would have been impossible, even with the ground sloping smoothly and gently to the front, as is the case here. Nowadays, however, magazine rifles can be fired so rapidly that these five hundred Irishmen can easily stop the advance of several thousand Germans, since there are no hedges or bushes to conceal the latter nearer than Promelles, one mile away. Besides that, the battalion machine gun is in Bois Farm, and there are plenty of obstacles in front. Last, but not least, the valley of Promelles is swept by the fire of the Scots Guards at Trou-du-Bois and the Highlanders near Botte Redoubt, and the 73rd, 7th, 14th, and 66th Batteries, as you will see from *Map 8.*

It has been necessary, by the way, to make so many obstacles in front of the whole of the Guards' position that the Buffs were sent from the 3rd Division yesterday to assist in their construction, returning to Maransart when they had finished. We notice that large openings have been left in the line of entanglements, through which the Grenadiers can advance and charge the Germans should the latter, while attacking any particular part of the position, give the British a chance of making a successful counter-attack, as explained on page 221.

Leaving the Irish Guards, and walking along the sunken road which joins the two villages of Bruyère, we see two battalions of infantry behind the hill. The men have piled arms, and are sitting or lying on the ground, talking and smoking. These are the local reserves of the Guards Brigade, consisting of the Grenadiers and the Royal West Kent

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Regiment. The latter regiment does not, as you know, belong to any brigade. It has been placed under General Carey's orders, as the position of the Guards on the right of the British line is very important. By marching along the roads or through gaps in the hedges and fences made by the sappers, the two battalions can advance to the help of any part of the Guards Brigade, or can make a counter-attack on the enemy.

We have now been around the whole of the position defended by the Guards, and must say farewell to them for the present while we follow the movements of the German army in its advance against the British.

There is no necessity for us to walk along the line occupied by the remainder of the 1st Army Corps. The positions of each regiment and of the various batteries and heavy guns are shown on *Map 8*, and have already been briefly described in Chapter XV. The principles on which all the intrenchments and obstacles have been made are similar to those followed by the Guards in fortifying Trou-du-Bois and its neighbourhood. In every case the greatest care has been taken to conceal the earthworks and the guns as much as possible, in order to prevent the enemy's artillery from seeing and destroying them; to put them in the best positions for firing over the ground across which the Germans will have to advance to the attack; and to provide as many obstacles in front as time will allow.*

* The only items on *Map 9* not dealt with in this chapter are the ammunition reserve and the dressing and collecting stations. The way in which these respectively supply the Guards Brigade with ammunition and look after its wounded men are described later in Chapter XXII.

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE GERMANS RECONNOITRE THE BRITISH POSITION.

(In this chapter we return to Malplaquez, and take up the story of the war where we left it in Chapter XII. The following events are described :—The Germans discover that the British cavalry have retired ; they follow them up ; their scouts hunt for the position of the British infantry ; the German commander-in-chief makes his plans for an attack.

Map 8 is the best one to refer to.)

WE must now go back a few hours.

It is midnight, but the scene round General Von Otendorf's headquarters, at a small inn in the village of St. Vincent, is not one of repose. Lights flicker from the windows, out of which roll clouds of tobacco smoke and the sound of many voices. Mounted orderlies clatter into the stone-paved courtyard every few minutes, bearing messages from all parts of the German cavalry screen, the regiments of which, stretching over twenty miles of country, are bivouacked in woods or billeted in villages at the various places where they found themselves when darkness put a stop to their long day's fight with the British.

Upstairs, in a large public room, sits Von Otendorf, a

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curved, well-coloured meerschaum pipe in his mouth, and a cup of coffee at his elbow. At the long table in front of him, strewn with maps and papers, several officers are hard at work writing. On the wall opposite the window is hung a very large map of the country, stuck all over with little red and blue flags, representing the positions of the British and German cavalry respectively. An officer is busy shifting these flags backwards and forwards as messages come in from the German patrols and scouts, reporting that the enemy has been found in one place, or has retreated from another or advanced to another. Sometimes he writes a number in pencil on the flag to show the strength of the German party which it represents, or the strength of the British force as guessed or found out by the scouts. In this way the German cavalry commander has a plan of the positions of the opposing forces kept constantly before his eyes, which helps him considerably in issuing orders.

At intervals a staff officer enters the room, salutes with German military precision, and reads a report to the general. The latter nods, and gives an order. One of the officers at the table writes furiously for a minute, and then hands his message to an orderly, who stalks off with it; and the man at the map takes out a flag here or puts one in there, as the case may be. Galloping about the country all day, working all night, the lot of a staff officer is a hard one.

Suddenly the clattering of a horse's hoofs at full gallop along the road is followed by a sound of plunging and

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sliding on the hard stones of the courtyard as his rider pulls up at the inn. Again the room door opens, and the staff officer enters—this time more rapidly than usual.

"Important news, sir! Colonel Haupt of the 9th Cuirassiers reports as follows:—'My patrols report that they found Malplaquez Plateau and Corroy clear of the enemy at 11.57 p.m. I have scouts along all the roads leading to the Dyle, and am sending a squadron along the highroad to Wavre, to ascertain direction of enemy's retreat.'"

There is a stir among the officers at the table as this message is read out, and the general nods approval.

"There is no answer to that," he says; "Colonel Haupt is doing all that is necessary."

Messages now begin to pour in from all parts of the German screen, announcing the retirement of the enemy at various places. Soon it is evident that the British have entirely evacuated the position which they held at nightfall.

"They have fallen back on the Dyle," says Von Otendorf. "We shall find them there at dawn." He looks at his watch—the hands point to one o'clock.

"Order a general advance of the cavalry at 2.30 a.m. The 1st Division will reconnoitre between Wavre and Etienne; the 2nd between Etienne and Genappe; the 3rd between Genappe and Nivelles. Tell the officers commanding them that I will be found at Quatre Bras at sunrise."

A scene of the utmost bustle ensues—officers writing

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orders, and troopers and cyclists dashing off with them. It is a good hour's tearing gallop to the left of the German line, so that some of the messengers have their work cut out for them.

Quatre Bras, too, is eleven miles away; so while Von Otendorf snatches an hour's sleep on a sofa in an adjoining room, his staff busily prepares to move his headquarters there. This does not take long, however; for under the deft hands of well-trained clerks, the piles of papers and maps disappear like magic into plainly lettered portfolios. These are strapped to the saddles of the staff orderlies, and presently all is ready for the general to start.

In the gray misty light which precedes the rising of the sun, the German cavalry pours over the fields and along the roads leading to the Dyle. The patrols of the 14th Hussars, who, you remember, are out scouting in front of the British position, fall back, and eventually retire over the river.

At sunrise, the very hour at which we inspected the British position, there is a fierce crackle of musketry from Noirhat (*see Map 8*), and half a dozen saddles of a too-daring German patrol are emptied by the rifles of the mounted infantry guarding the bridge. This is the first sound of firing to break the stillness of the dawn on this fateful 17th of July—a day which ushers in as long and obstinate an infantry battle as the world has ever seen.

Now begins a prolonged and strenuous effort by the

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German horsemen to find out what has become of the British cavalry, and where the British infantry is posted. To do this they push forward patrols and scouts. When these encounter the enemy, squadrons of Cuirassiers, Uhlans, or Lancers, accompanied by horse artillery guns, dash forward and endeavour to push him back. If a stout resistance is met with, and no advance can be made, the inference is drawn that the place is occupied in force. Officers and scouts then endeavour to spy out the enemy's exact position, and reports of their success are sent from time to time to General Von Otendorf.

Eventually, the advance of the German cavalry is checked all along the Dyle. The 1st Division encounters a formidable obstacle opposite the Belgian army, as the river is unfordable below Etienne, and is defended by close rifle fire from the north bank.

The 2nd Division makes constant efforts to cross the river between Etienne and Genappe; but although the Dyle is little more than a good-sized brook here, yet all the bridges have been destroyed, and the rifles and machine gun of the mounted infantry in the villages and of the cavalry on Ways Ridge forbid its passage. The German horse artillery batteries unlimber on Thyle Ridge, and engage in a duel with the British guns across the river. With little result, however; and finally the commander of the 2nd Division reports to General Von Otendorf that he is unable to cross the Dyle owing to the resistance of the enemy.

On the extreme left, the German 3rd Cavalry Division

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succeeds in advancing as far as Baulers and Baudemont. (*See Map 8.*) Here they are checked by the Carabiniers, 10th Hussars, and 12th Lancers, who move out of Witterzee, where they have spent the night. Some spirited skirmishing takes place; and though the British are driven back by superior numbers, yet they retire very slowly, and succeed in preventing the German cavalry from obtaining much information about the position of General French's infantry.

While the mounted part of his great army is thus energetically employed in trying to find out the exact locality of the Allies' defences, Prince Lebenfeld, the commander-in-chief of all the German forces in Belgium, arrives at Quatre Bras. He is constantly informed by General Otendorf of the progress of the cavalry. As the general gradually ascertains the whereabouts of the British and Belgians, he reports to the commander-in-chief, and eventually the latter decides upon his plan of action for the day.

Briefly, the information sent in by his scouts leads him to believe that the Allies are extended along the Dyle from Ottenbourg to Trou-du-Bois. Part of their position —namely, the Belgian part—he guesses correctly. But the British "false position" deceives him; he imagines Ways Ridge to be their main line. His scouts, however, have reported that Promelles, Lannoy, and Witterzee (*see Map 8*) are only weakly held, so the Prince supposes that these are merely detached posts which can easily be captured. Finally, what decides him that Trou-du-Bois

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is the right of the British line is the fact that their cavalry are assembling to the west of that village, and are slowly retreating past it before his own horsemen. It is the custom, you see, for mounted troops, when they are driven back by their enemy, to retire round the ends of their infantry's line, and Prince Lebenfeld guesses that this is what the British cavalry are doing.

The German commander-in-chief has no less than four army corps a few hours' march behind him. He determines to make a pretence of attacking the Belgians with the 1st, and the British on Ways Ridge with the 2nd. While the attention of the Allies is thus directed to the Germans in front of them, the 3rd Army Corps is to march round by Nivelles and Seigneur, and make a strong attack from the west on the right end of the British line. By sending plenty of cavalry out in front of this army corps to sweep away the enemy's scouts, the Prince hopes to be able to conceal its march from the British. If he manages to do this, his attack will be so sudden, that it will probably take the British by surprise, and will thus have more chance of success. Finally, the commander-in-chief orders that the 3rd Army Corps' attack on Trou-du-Bois shall not commence until half an hour after the 1st and 2nd Army Corps have begun their false attack, thus giving them time to draw the enemy's attention thoroughly towards the Dyle.

The 4th Army Corps, which had a particularly hard day's work yesterday, is kept as a reserve, three miles south of Quatre Bras. As, however, there will be a large

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gap between the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps when they are making their attacks, the 4th Army Corps is ordered to send one of its brigades (6,000 men) and all its cavalry and artillery to guard it.

Having thus seen how the Germans hunted for and found the Allies' position, and what plans their commander-in-chief has made for attacking it, let us now follow the movements of the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps in their advance on the British. The doings of the 1st Army Corps need not be described; it is sufficient to say that the Belgians, with the aid of their unfordable river, find themselves quite capable of keeping their opponents on the far side of the Dyle.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ADVANCE OF THE SECOND GERMAN ARMY CORPS.

(This chapter describes how the 2nd German Army Corps gets into position on the 17th of July for carrying out the attack on Ways Ridge ordered by Prince Lebenfeld. The positions of the various regiments forming this army corps are shown on *Map 8*, and their movements indicated by dotted lines and arrow-heads.)

WHILE Von Otendorf and his horsemen are trying to discover the position of the British army, the German infantry are slowly advancing towards the Dyle from the various villages where they spent the night.

The 2nd Army Corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General Hofman, was quartered at two places, called Ernage and Noirmont, close to the broad highroad running from Namur through Gembloux to Wavre. (*See Map 3.*) The commander-in-chief had originally intended that it should advance at daybreak and attack the British cavalry at Malplaquez; but, as you know, the latter retired during the night, and consequently this plan was upset.*

At nine o'clock in the morning of the 17th of July, the

* A German army corps consists of about the same number of men as a British, but is divided into two divisions only. You will see the composition of the 2nd Army Corps on page 489.

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vanguards of the 3rd and 4th Divisions, which form the 2nd Army Corps, reach Justice Tree crossroads and Heuval respectively, having marched from their camping grounds by separate roads. They are now just in the right-hand bottom corner of *Map 8*. Here they halt and wait for orders, as Prince Lebenfeld is at this moment only just completing his plans for the day's operations.

At a quarter-past nine an officer of the commander-in-chief's staff gallops up to General Hofman and hands him a written order. We already know what this is—the 2nd Army Corps is to attack Ways Ridge.

General Hofman holds a brief consultation with the generals who command his two divisions. They examine their maps. Finally the general says,—

"Prince Lebenfeld merely wishes us to engage the enemy's attention while the 3rd Army Corps is getting into position to attack them from Witterzee. He evidently, from the tone of his order, does not wish us to lose many men by pressing forward too vigorously, if the enemy makes a very obstinate resistance. So I think it will be sufficient if we advance to the river Dyle and attack the villages which are garrisoned by the enemy.

"You, lieutenant-general"—and he turns to the officer commanding the 3rd Division—"will attack Bousval and Noirhat. And you"—addressing the general of the 4th Division—"will attack Genappe and Ways.

"When you are both in position, and ready to advance to the attack, let me know. I will then give the signal. After that, I leave the attack entirely in your hands.

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You will do as you think fit. If you see a favourable opportunity for pressing home your attack, seize it. But remember that our chief object is to engage the attention of the British, and not to expose ourselves to severe loss by attacking rashly. Send all your reports to me at Hez."

The generals salute, and gallop off to their divisions.

Let us follow the 4th Division, and see how it gets into position for attacking Genappe.

Its general at once orders his artillery regiments, the 7th and 8th, to trot forward and open fire on the British while the infantry is marching towards Genappe. He then gallops off to Baisy with his staff. Reaching the hill above the village, he surveys the British position through his telescope, and makes his plans for attack.

The position of the 4th Division at 12.15 a.m. is shown on *Map 8.** It is still marching; the leading man of the vanguard (which consists of half the 1st Battalion of the XIIIth Regiment) is just entering Baisy, but the last man of the rearguard is only approaching Heuval.

This will give you some idea of the great length of road occupied by 12,000 infantrymen on the march. It also shows you what a dangerous thing the 4th Division is doing. For the Germans of the IXth Regiment are not in Bousval Wood yet, as shown on the map, and if

* The 4th Division consists of the XIIIth, XIVth, XVth, and XVIth Regiments, each three battalions strong. It is shown in two positions on the map—once when it is on the march, and once when it is attacking Genappe. The 1st Battalion of the XIIIth Regiment is denoted by the numbers "1st/XIIIth;" the 2nd Battalion by "2nd/XIIIth," etc.

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the British were to advance suddenly they would catch the division in a very awkward position for fighting, extended as it is in a long thin line for five and a half miles. The 4th Division is, in fact, making what is called a "flank march," which means, as you see, that it is exposing its side or flank to the enemy instead of its front.

However, in this instance the flank march is not so dangerous as it looks on the map. Thyle Ridge not only conceals the Germans from the view of the British, but is also occupied by the artillery and cavalry of the division—the former shelling the enemy, and the latter sending out scouts to watch the valley of the Dyle.

Although the vanguard marches into the little village of Baisy at 12.15 a.m., the 4th Division is not ready to start its attack on Genappe and Ways until nearly two hours later. Even then all its regiments have not arrived in the neighbourhood of Baisy Hill, from which the final advance is to be made, for the last man in the column is nearly three hours' march behind the first. By 2.15, however, the general of the division considers that sufficient men have arrived to enable him to commence his attack, so a German signaller on Baisy Hill flashes a heliograph message to another signaller on the ridge near Hez, telling General Hofman that the 4th Division is in position.

The 3rd Division is ready long before this.* Marching

* The 3rd Division consists of the 5th Brigade (IXth and Xth Regiments) and the 6th Brigade (XIth and XIIth Regiments); also the 5th and 6th Artillery Regiments.

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from Justice Tree by separate roads (as indicated on the map), its two brigades deploy for attack under shelter of Thyle Ridge, protected, like the 4th Division, by their cavalry and artillery. They then advance over the ridge, and halt in the woods opposite Noirhat and Bousval. Scouts place themselves among the trees at the northern edge of the woods, and the remainder of the men lie down to enjoy a short rest—well earned by the hard fighting and marching of the last few days—until word arrives that the 4th Division is ready, and the order to attack is given.

You may ask, "But why wait for the 4th Division? Why not attack at once?" The reason for this is, that it is generally advisable, when you are making an attack, for all parts of your line to advance at once. If each part began its attack as soon as it was ready, the enemy might have a chance of defeating it before the other parts came up.

It is now nearly half-past two in the afternoon. The German field-guns are thundering from the ridge. The German riflemen are lying under cover of hills, villages, and woods, stretched along the Dyle for close on five miles. The German cavalry are grouped in regiments and squadrons, watching the intervals between the different infantry brigades, and taking care that no enemy sneaks round the flanks and surprises the ends of the line.

It is a moment of suspense—the signal to advance is about to be given.

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CHAPTER XIX.

A DAY ON THE "FALSE POSITION."

(This chapter contains the experiences of Lieutenant Cairnes of the Royal Scots Greys on July the 17th. It begins with a brief description of how the Greys occupy their part of the "false position" on Ways Ridge. It then describes how the German cavalry scouts are repulsed when they endeavour to find out the exact position of the British; and finally winds up with an account of the attack of the 2nd German Army Corps, the preparations for which you read in the last chapter.

Map 8 is the best one to refer to when reading the following narrative.)

RURR-R-R-RUMF—er-er-er-ramf—roomf-rumf-rampf-raampf! The long-drawn notes of the trumpet echo through the streets of the village of Sauvagemont.

Lieutenant Cairnes turns uneasily on his couch and groans in his sleep. He is dreaming of yesterday's fight—of the blare of the trumpets sounding the "charge;" the wild rush of the furious gallop, knee to knee, boot to boot; the hoarse cheers, flashing swords, finally the terrific shock of horse against horse; friends and foes mixed in a seething mass of swaying figures; a blood-red mist before his eyes, and—

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Rurr-r-r-rumf, rampf, raampf! Hang it all! will he never get the sound out of his ears?

A heavy hand shakes him violently by the shoulder.

"Now, Cairnes, my boy, up you get! Parade is ordered for three o'clock."

Cairnes opens his eyes just in time to see the back of a brother officer as he walks out of the room. He was not dreaming at all—the trumpet really is sounding!

He rolls off his bed and sits on the edge. Ugh! how stiff he is, he thinks, as he stretches his arms. What would he not give for another ten minutes?

Then he recollects himself: yesterday, senior subaltern of No. 1 Troop—to-day, commanding C Squadron of His Majesty's Royal Scots Greys; for the regiment has lost heavily in senior officers in the affair at Malplaquez.

He plunges his head into a bucket of water, buckles on his sword, and is ready for work in five minutes. No time for shaving, and no need for dressing; for when he had finished looking after the comfort of his men last night, he had tumbled straight on to his bed, clothes and all, absolutely dead beat after the fighting and hard riding of the day.

The village street is looking gray in the misty air of early morning as Cairnes emerges from the door; but in spite of the hour—half-past two—it is alive with the men of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade. Royals, Greys, and Inniskillings come tumbling out of the doorways, buttoning up their jackets and rubbing their eyes, still half-asleep after only three hours' rest. They did not get into Sauvage-

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mont until half-past ten last night—some of them even later than that—and before they turned in they had to rub down and feed their chargers.

Cairnes strides through the street to the field in which the horses of his squadron are picketed, guarded by sentries. The village is partly deserted by its inhabitants, many of whom have accepted the warning of the British commander and fled towards Brussels to avoid the German shells which are likely to be falling soon on Sauvagemont. The daring ones, and those who could not tear themselves away from their old homes, have remained as the involuntary hosts of the British troopers. The doors of all the houses bear large figures and letters in white chalk, written by the quartermasters of the various regiments. Several in a row are marked "C Squadron, Greys;" on the next lot is inscribed "B Squadron, Greys;" and so on, each being marked with numbers, besides, to show how many men it is capable of holding.

Cairnes soon has his troopers hard at work. The horses are roughly groomed, watered at a neighbouring brook, and fed. This done, the men return to the houses, where some of their comrades have been busy preparing great bowls of steaming tea. They make a hasty breakfast off some of the rations they carry in their haversacks, which are plentifully added to by the kindly villagers, who find that the famous British soldiers who have come to the assistance of their country are grateful guests.

"Boot and saddle" sounds at 2.45, and the men of C Squadron fall in beside their horses. Cairnes trots

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along the ranks to see that all is right, and receives a report from each troop leader. Eighty men are all that C can muster this morning—fifteen killed and twenty-eight wounded was the result of yesterday's sharp encounter with the Cuirassiers.

The order is given to "mount," and the squadron files off to the place appointed for the rendezvous of the regiment, a piece of waste land south of the village. Here the Greys soon gather together, and followed by their machine gun, ammunition wagons, and medical cart, trot off along the road leading from Sauvagemont to Ways.

Cairnes is riding at the head of his squadron when a trooper canters back from the head of the column and salutes:—

"Colonel's compliments, sir, and will you join him."

Leaving his squadron in charge of the senior subaltern, Cairnes gallops to the front. He finds the colonel accompanied by the commanding officers of the other two squadrons.

"Good morning, Cairnes," says the colonel. "Glad to see you in command of your squadron, although I am sorry for the cause. I've been to see M'Gregor this morning, and he seems to be getting on well; but I am afraid poor Donald will not last through the day—a bad sword thrust."

The colonel refers to the major and the captain of C Squadron, who were wounded yesterday.

"I have sent for you all," he continues, as they canter along the road and leave the regiment behind, "to explain

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to-day's operations. The brigade is ordered to hold that long hill in front of us," and he points to Ways Ridge, showing up dark against the brightening sky. "Our regiment is to defend a piece of it which extends from the Genappe–Mont St. Jean road to the southern edge of Ruart Wood. As the distance is over a mile and a half, we shall not be able to hold it very strongly. I am going to give each of you roughly about half a mile to defend. You will be responsible for watching the ground immediately in front of you.

"The object of our being sent to Ways Ridge is to deceive the enemy by making him imagine that the ridge is occupied in force by our army. You will therefore take great care to keep the German scouts at a distance; and if you are attacked by the enemy's infantry, check their advance as long as possible. Our orders are to retire if there is any danger of our being captured. With this caution I will leave you three with full power to do what you think best when the enemy attacks you. You are your own masters, and must make arrangements for your own retreat, except that"—and the colonel lays great emphasis on the words—"any one who is forced to retire must first send word to the squadron on each side of him, and must then rendezvous at Flamandes, behind the Highland Brigade. I shall place myself at Glabais with some signallers, so keep one eye on the village, in case any fresh orders should arrive from the brigadier."

The colonel and his squadron leaders find Ways Ridge occupied by the Manchester Regiment, which has been

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forming part of the outposts of the army during the night. Riding along the hill, the colonel quickly selects positions for his squadrons, and points out, with the aid of the maps carried by his officers, the exact piece of ground which each has to defend. They then gallop off, bring up their squadrons, and post them in favourable positions. When this has been done, the Manchesters retire behind the hill, where they assemble and wait for the order to rejoin their brigade at Maransart.

Cairnes dismounts his squadron behind the ridge at the edge of Ruart Wood. He leaves one troop here as a reserve, but orders its lieutenant to send out at intervals patrols of two men to keep him in touch with the squadrons on either side of him, and with C Company of the Mounted Infantry in Ways.

Leaving the horses at Ruart Wood with two or three men, he takes the remainder of his squadron to the top of Ways Ridge, where he places them in a hollow road, from which they command a good view of the valley in front and of the hills on the other side of the Dyle.

He has barely completed his preparations, when the first rays of the rising sun flash across the tree tops of a large forest two or three miles to the east, and the faint "rub-a-dub-a-dub" of distant firing breaks out on the still morning air from somewhere in that direction. These are the first shots fired on the 17th on this side of the Dyle, and come, as you will remember, from the M.I. at Noirhat. The sound of the firing quickly dies away, and all is again quiet.

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Cairnes stretches himself luxuriously on a little mound close to the road, from the top of which he can look down, concealed by long grass, into the valley of the Dyle (*point "z" on the map*). Just in front of him, and rather to his right, are Ways and Genappe. Behind some buildings and orchards on the northern outskirts he can see the horses of B and C Companies of the 2nd M.I., who are defending the bridges over the river at the two villages. The Dyle is within easy rifle shot, rather more than half a mile away. Close to it, on the far side, runs the railway line to Wavre, on a fairly high embankment.

"That will make a capital place for the enemy to collect behind to rush the village," he thinks. "I wonder what the range is?"

He spreads his map on the ground, marks on it the spot where he is lying, and then measures the distance with a piece of paper between it and every conspicuous point he can see in the valley and on the hills beyond. He makes a note of each distance in his pocket-book, tears the page out, and hands it to his trumpeter, who is close behind him, with orders to take it round the troop lieutenants, so that they will be able to let the men know the range at which to set their rifle-sights when the enemy shows himself near any of these points.

Cairnes's three troops are just in front of him, stretched along the road at intervals for about a quarter of a mile. By standing in the ditch and leaning over the low bank beside it, the men are well sheltered from the enemy's

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bullets, and can see practically the whole ground between themselves and the river, and, of course, nearly all the land on the opposite bank. The troopers have each one hundred and fifty cartridges in their bandoliers and haversacks. They are at present lying on the ground, their rifles beside them, taking it easy. There is no need to worry them, the enemy is not in sight; so the officer of each troop posts a couple of sentries, and the remainder of the men smoke, chat, or sleep as the desire seizes them. Half a mile to the right, behind the hill, are the medical cart and ammunition wagons of the regiment.

A section of two guns of O Battery comes up on the left of Cairnes's squadron, and its subaltern joins him on the mound.

"Precious little cover for my guns here," grumbles the subaltern, as he lights a cigarette.

"I tell you what we can do," replies Cairnes, thoughtfully watching the hillside opposite with his glasses. "If you get your men to cut some big branches in the wood there, and pile them up in front of your guns, they will conceal you from view at any rate. And they will not attract attention, for the trees behind you form a nice background, and will prevent them from showing."

"Capital!" says the subaltern. "It would also help me if you could spare me some of your men to dig a small trench about one hundred yards to my left."

"A trench! What do you want that for?"

"For a 'dummy.' If you tell them to pile the earth up well, it will catch the enemy's eye, and when the firing be-

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gins he will possibly devote his attention to that instead of to my guns. It is worth trying, anyhow."

Both suggestions are quickly carried out. A little bank of fresh brown earth about two feet high, and as long as a cricket pitch, is soon thrown up by twenty Greys a little in front and well to the left of the guns, while a screen of leafy branches is built about twenty yards in front of them, effectually concealing them from the view of any one on the opposite hillside.

Before these preparations are quite completed, Cairnes sees a couple of figures appear on the crest of Baisy Hill across the river, about a mile and a half away. They ride furiously down the slope towards Ways, and are presently followed by half a dozen blue-coated horsemen. The Germans are evidently driving in the Hussars' scouts.

There is dead silence—not a rifle speaks. The scouts disappear from Cairnes's view behind the houses of Ways; the Germans follow. After a moment comes a faint sound of shouting—a single shot—and then silence once more. The enemy's patrol has evidently walked into a hornet's nest, and been captured by the mounted infantry.

Blue-coated figures now show themselves constantly on the hills across the river. On several occasions more Hussar scouts make dashes for Genappe or Ways, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Rifle shots begin to sound at regular intervals along the valley.

At 5 a.m. Cairnes is startled by the sudden "bang" of one of O Battery's 12-pounders close to him. Then there is a puff of smoke marking the spot where the shell bursts

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on the opposite hillside. Bringing his glasses to bear on the place, Cairnes sees a confused mass of men and horses on Thyle Ridge, about one and a half miles away.

"Guns to the left—about 2,400 yards away. Try a shot at them, Mackintosh, if you can see them," he calls out to the best shot in his squadron.

O Battery's guns speak at regular intervals, and several of C Squadron's marksmen fire carefully and deliberately at the enemy. The rest of the men are not allowed to shoot yet, as the distance is great, and it would only be wasting ammunition if any but the best shots fired.

The German guns open fire. They bombard Ways and Genappe. More batteries arrive on the scene. Every minute the shells burst thicker and thicker.

Cairnes can see the enemy's guns quite plainly. He counts them carefully. There are twenty-four—four batteries in a line—a splendid target for the two British guns, which drop shell after shell on them. For some time there is no reply, as the enemy evidently cannot tell where these shells come from. Then one or two drop on the ridge and explode on the ground near the dummy shelter trench; the Germans have seen it, and are getting its range. Presently a succession of shrapnel shells explode in the air over the trench, and shower bullets on to it. It is most amusing for the Greys, for naturally no one is in the trench.

Soon afterwards a large body of German horsemen dash down the hill and make for the bridges across the Dyle between Ways and Bousval. They are greeted with a hot rifle

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fire, which empties several saddles; but galloping fast, they are soon under the shelter of the railway embankment. The next minute another lot gallop down and disappear behind the embankment.

Shells are now falling thickly along the ridge, but the German gunners are evidently shooting in the dark; they are still in ignorance of the exact position of the British. O Battery, on the other hand, is, as Cairnes can see, making excellent practice. It is a case of two guns against twenty-four; but the two are concealed, and the twenty-four are not, so the former get the better of the deal.

Suddenly a rapid outburst of firing from the Inniskillings on his left and the mounted infantrymen below them attracts the attention of Cairnes. Presently he sees the cause of this. A large party of Germans has emerged from behind the railway embankment, and is attempting to cross the river between Ways and Bousval. The bridges, however, have been destroyed, and the rifle fire from the ridge soon drives the enemy back.

Shortly after this the Germans succeed in discovering the position of the two 12-pounders, and pour a shower of shrapnel on them. The gunners lose several men, and finally their subaltern orders them to run the guns down the back of the hill.

At six o'clock a captive balloon rises from behind Thyle Ridge, evidently with the intention of spying out the position of the British troops. But the wind is too strong for this. It is quite impossible for any one to take accurate observations when the car in which he is seated is

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swaying and jerking in a heavy breeze. The Germans apparently soon discover this, for after about half an hour the balloon descends into the shelter of the Thyle Valley again. This is fortunate for the British; for if the officer in the balloon had been able to keep his telescope steady, he would soon have found out that Ways Ridge was only held by cavalrymen, and then the Germans would probably have guessed that the ridge was merely a "false" position, and not the real one, as they imagine.

Later on, Cairnes sees a dismounted party of Germans trying to get into Bousval; but they are driven back by the fire of the fifty mounted infantrymen stationed in the village.

After this the enemy makes no more attempts to get across the Dyle; they have evidently satisfied themselves that the British are holding Ways Ridge in some strength. At 8.30 their horse artillery batteries withdraw from Thyle Ridge, and, except for an occasional shot here and there, silence reigns along the Dyle.

Cairnes seizes the opportunity to replenish his ammunition, and dispatches a messenger to the regimental wagons, which are about half a mile away. One of them comes along the valley of the Cal, and approaches as near the position of C Squadron as possible, without revealing itself to the enemy. Each troop then sends a couple of men to bring up a box of 1,100 cartridges (the wagon carries twenty-five of these boxes), and they are distributed among the men. By this time one of the wagons is almost empty: it transfers its remaining boxes to the other, and trots off

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to Sauvagemont, where the ammunition column of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade is stationed. This column consists of about twenty wagons, some carrying spare shells for the horse artillery, and some spare rifle cartridges for the troopers. The empty wagon is left with the column. and one of the full ones is sent up to replace it.

Shortly after ten o'clock some German batteries again appear on Thyle Ridge. They are warmly greeted by the two guns of O Battery, which have changed their position, and it is some time before the enemy discover their locality. When they do, the British pieces are quickly silenced.

For over four hours the Germans intermittently bombard Ways Ridge and all the villages along the Dyle. The British horse artillery and pom-poms change their positions continually, and come into action in new places time after time with obstinate determination, only to be driven under shelter of the ridge again after firing a few shots.

Occasionally a shell comes sailing through the air and bursts with a more terrific crash than usual. Cairnes recognizes the cloud of stinking yellow smoke which follows: it is a howitzer shell containing what is known as a "high explosive," which bursts with much greater violence than an ordinary shrapnel. The lieutenant guesses from this that the German infantry must be getting near, for howitzers only accompany the infantry of an army.*

* Cairnes is right. The artillery which is bombarding Ways Ridge belongs to the 2nd Army Corps, which at the present moment is getting into position for attack, as described in the last chapter.

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Until one o'clock a few picked marksmen of the Greys are employed in trying to pick off the German gunners—a difficult matter, as they are over one and a half miles away, and have concealed themselves very skilfully. At that hour, however, the enemy brings more batteries into action. Some shell Ways Ridge, but the majority appear to Cairnes to be firing into Genappe, Ways, and Bousval. The fire slowly increases until it is nothing short of terrific—the sky seems to rain shells. The troopers on the ridge lie flat in their ditches and shelter trenches, and clouds of smoke and flame rise from the villages, which are burning in several places.

Judging from the intensity of this fire, Cairnes supposes that it must be a preparation for the German infantry attack. He was in the South African War, but never saw anything then to compare with this. The Germans, he thinks, must have at least a hundred guns in action; the air is darkened by drifting clouds of smoke, out of which shower fragments of metal, splinters, and bullets.*

It is fortunate for the British that the wind blows strongly, and drives the smoke from the shells down the valley, otherwise it would be impossible to see as far as the river. It is difficult enough as it is, owing to the smoke of the burning houses.

Shortly after 2.30, Cairnes sees a number of figures moving on the slopes of Baisy Hill. They are descending

* As we know, having followed their preparations for attack, the Germans have all the artillery of the 2nd and 4th Army Corps grouped at intervals between Thine and Noirhat—that is to say, nearly three hundred field-guns and howitzers along a front of nine miles.

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towards Ways, and are about a mile and a quarter away when he first catches sight of them. Watching intently through his field-glasses, he gradually makes out line after line of men advancing by short rushes in a crouching attitude, occasionally lying down and firing.

Cairnes calls to his troopers, who respond right well in spite of the shells bursting all around. Jumping up from the bottom of the ditch in which they have been lying, they lean over the low bank by the roadside, and begin firing steadily and coolly at the distant lines.

The whole ridge now resounds with rifle fire, from the Greys on the right to the squadron of Hussars in La Motte Wood on the left. Two 4·7 guns of the 101st Heavy Battery near Botte Redoubt also join in, and drop lyddite and shrapnel shells along the front slopes of Baisy Hill at a range of two and a half miles. When the former hit the ground they burst with terrific violence, and throw up columns of earth and dust, which combine with the flame and thick yellow smoke of the explosion in making a scene of death and destruction, in which it seems to Cairnes almost impossible that any one should live.

Both Ways and Genappe are now burning fiercely; and looking away to his left, the lieutenant can see flames and smoke rising from Bousval. What with conflagrations and raining shells, the mounted infantrymen must be having a bad time.

Like waves beating on a beach, the German lines surge forward towards the river. As they approach the railway, the men make a wild dash for shelter behind the embank-

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THE GERMANS ADVANCING OVER RAILWAY EMBANKMENT.

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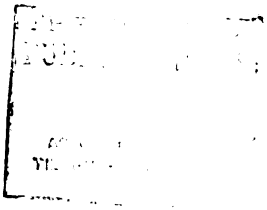

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ment, each man for himself, and disappear from the view of the Greys on the ridge.

For a time they make no effort to advance beyond this. Line after line rolls forward, and joins the first behind the embankment. By half-past three at least three or four thousand men must have gathered in front of Ways and Genappe alone.

Suddenly the shells commence to fall thicker and thicker on the ridge, and Cairnes notices that they no longer burst over the villages. The time has come; the enemy's artillery has shifted the whole of its fire to the ridge, so as to let the infantry assault the villages.

Heads begin to show over the embankment, then bodies, then a wave of dark-blue figures flows over the shining rails, and rolls rapidly towards the river, barely two hundred yards away.

Relieved from the torrent of shells which has been pouring on them, the mounted infantrymen rise from behind trench and wall. Some crowd into the houses which are still standing on the edge of the river, and rifle and machine gun begin to speak.

The artillery of both sides is now out of it, so far as the fight for the villages is concerned—the combatants are too close together for the gunners of either army to fire without running the risk of hitting their own countrymen. But the German guns bombard the ridge so heavily that the cavalrymen suffer severely, and finally their officers order them to lie flat in their trenches and ditches.

It is a critical moment. Will the two hundred mounted

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infantrymen and their machine gun be able to keep the enemy back, or will they retreat?

A column of smoke, mixed with bricks and bits of wood, shoots up into the air in front of Ways, and a muffled report rises above the sound of the rifle firing. C Company has blown up its bridge.

For a time the mounted infantry hold their own. The Germans reach the river, which is little more than a good-sized brook here, and go straight into it. The banks are steep, and shelter them from fire; but the ground over which they have advanced is covered with dead and wounded men.

Again there is a long interval before the advance is resumed. The firing seems to decrease a little, but occasionally there is a rapid outburst, caused by some attempt of the enemy to move forward from the river.

Shortly after five, an ammunition wagon and a machine gun emerge from the north end of Ways, and gallop furiously along the sunken road leading over Ways Ridge. The mounted infantry are evidently going to retire.

Cairnes calls to his men to get ready, for he will have to check the German pursuit. He also sends his trumpeter back to Ruart Wood to tell the horse-holders to be ready to bring the horses up close behind his position when he signals.

Presently there is another heavy outbreak of firing from Ways. Then a swarm of mounted infantrymen dash out of the streets of the village, mount their horses, which have been sheltered by the houses, and gallop for the ridge.

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There is no order or regularity about this retreat: the men have been told to scatter, each to ride for all he is worth for his own safety, and to meet behind Ways Ridge.

Some of the German infantrymen catch sight of them and fire; but before the majority of them can get clear of the river banks, the British are over the ridge. They have done their duty, and hung on to their post as long as possible, and have effected their retreat very neatly. When the blue coats of the enemy emerge from behind the houses in pursuit, Cairnes orders his men up, and greets them with a deadly fire at six hundred yards range. The other cavalrymen along the ridge join in, and the Germans speedily disappear into the surrounding buildings, and open a heavy fusillade on their opponents. This, combined with the shells from their guns, soon drives the Greys into their ditch again.

At six o'clock the situation all along the "false position" is somewhat as follows. The Germans are in all the villages on the Dyle between Promelles and Noirhat. They seem content to stay where they are. They do not know how many of the British are holding Ways Ridge. Should they be strong, it would be a foolhardy undertaking to advance up the smooth, gentle slopes of the valley, especially as there is very little cover available, and the range is so short as to render rifle fire deadly accurate. So the German infantrymen remain where they are for the present, firing whenever they see any one to fire at; while their artillery keeps up a bombardment which, though steady, is not nearly so vigorous as before.

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Under this combined fire the British cavalry and horse artillery remain inactive. The men lie under what cover they have, and the guns stay behind the ridge. They are playing a game of "bluff" admirably, and have succeeded in delaying the attack on the real position for a whole day; for it is now so late that it is not likely that the enemy, even if he drives them from the ridge, will make an attack against the British infantry this evening. The Germans, however, are not left in peace. The 4·7's from their well-concealed position near Botte Redoubt, and the howitzer batteries from behind the infantry intrenchments, keep up a continual fire on the villages occupied by the enemy, the howitzers being directed by artillery officers stationed on the top of Ways Ridge, whence they signal to their batteries and tell them where to aim.

For the next two hours there is comparative peace along Ways Ridge: shells are still falling, it is true, but for all that it is comparative peace after the previous heavy bombardment.

Cairnes tightens his belt; he has finished the ration he brought with him some time ago, and is beginning to feel a "bit peckish," as he says. Some of his men are smoking; others are actually asleep, in spite of the occasional crash of a bursting shell.

"Signal, sir," suddenly says his sergeant-major, who has crept up behind him, pointing towards a village about a mile away in the valley behind the ridge.

Cairnes swings round cautiously, for the slightest exposure produces a bullet from Ways, and levels his field-

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glasses at the village. It is Glabais, which his colonel told him this morning would be his headquarters for the day.

A figure on the tower of the chapel is waving a flag to and fro. "CSQ," says the flag, "CSQ–CSQ–CSQ." This is the signal that the colonel wants to talk to C Squadron.

"Pass the word for the signaller," orders Cairnes.

"Trooper Macpherson!" shouts the sergeant-major.

"Shot, sir," replies a voice.

"Where's the flag?"

"Here, sir."

"Pass it up, then. Now, sergeant-major, lie flat on your back and answer."

The sergeant-major turns over, holds the flag in the air, and waves, "CSQ–CSQ." A shower of bullets whistles overhead—one goes through the cloth. Cairnes watches the man on the tower through his glasses. Suddenly he says, "Now signal 'Greys.' They have just signalled 'Scots.'"

The sergeant-major waves, "G-R-E-Y-S," and the man on the tower knows by this that he is in communication with friends, for the signal was arranged beforehand. An enemy might reply "CSQ" if he saw "CSQ" being signalled to him, but he would hardly know that he had to answer "Greys" when the word "Scots" was signalled.

Cairnes then reads aloud the message which the man on the tower sends:—

"*From O.C. Scots Greys to O.C. C Squadron. Retire to Flamandes at nine. Leave patrol to watch roads.*"

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"Good! Answer 'All right,' sergeant-major."

He looks at his watch. The hands point to a quarter to eight. There are one or two things to do before he retires, of which the most important is to bury the dead. C Squadron has lost eight men killed and fifteen wounded to-day. The latter have already been attended to by the Greys' doctor, and removed by the bearer company of the brigade; only the former remain to be dealt with.

Cairnes orders each troop to bury its own dead. The melancholy duty is soon performed: a shallow trench is made at the edge of the wood; the bodies are laid in it; Cairnes says a few words of the burial service, and the earth is thrown over. The dead men's arms and accoutrements are strapped on to their horses, and by a quarter to nine everything is ready for a move.

It is time to be making a start, so Cairnes orders one troop to retire down the hill to their horses. The men sling their rifles over their backs and crawl out of the ditch on hands and knees. Wriggling on their stomachs across the road and over the exposed field behind it, they gradually get under the shelter of the ridge, and then walk leisurely off to the place where their horses are stationed. The second and third troops soon follow, and presently the whole squadron is gathered by the edge of the wood.

Cairnes has been ordered to leave a patrol "to watch roads." Presumably the colonel means the roads which lead towards the enemy from the piece of country he has been defending during the day. There are three of these, so he leaves a sergeant and twelve men of the 4th Troop

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for vedette duty. (*N.B.*—A vedette is a mounted sentry.) He orders the sergeant to place a group of four men on each road: three of them will remain behind the hill with the four horses, while the remaining man acts as sentry and watches the valley from the top of the ridge.

"I am afraid you will be out all night, Sergeant Maxwell," says Cairnes. "You had better make your men take their bearings carefully, so that any of them will be able to find their way to Flamandes in the dark. I will send you out some food when I get in; but if by any chance it should not reach you, you can open your emergency rations. The countersign for the night is 'Plevna.' Send all your reports to the colonel at Flamandes."

With this parting injunction, Cairnes swings himself on to his horse, and punctually at nine o'clock, C Squadron, now only fifty-seven strong, moves off at a canter across the fields to Flamandes.

It feels good to be in the saddle again, thinks the lieutenant, tired and stiff after nearly seventeen hours of lying in a constrained position with nerves strung to full tension, and neck and eyes aching from the effort to keep a constant lookout through field-glasses.

If you think this last a little thing, try it for *one* short hour only. Lie on your face in long grass, cock your head back, and raise your glasses, resting your half-lifted body on chest and elbows. You will soon be baffled to say which aches most—the back of your neck, your elbows, or your eyes. Then multiply the ache by seventeen, add an enormous weight of responsibility to your mind, and the

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constant "bang-crash-bang" of gun, bursting shell, and rifle to the drums of your ears, and you will get some idea of Lieutenant Cairnes's feelings after his hard day's work.

Passing through the line of sentries thrown out by the Seaforth Highlanders to guard their front during the night, the men of C Squadron soon reach Flamandes. Here they find ten cottage doors labelled with the now familiar "C Squadron, Greys." While the horses are being picketed in the gardens, and groomed, fed, and watered, a man from each troop draws his comrades' food from the regimental supply wagon and carries it to their quarters. Here, the day's work over, the men cook their dinners—supper would be a better name for the meal, considering the hour—and by eleven o'clock the village is as quiet as a church, except for the occasional neigh of a horse or the snore of an over-tired trooper.

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CHAPTER XX.

THE GERMAN FLANK ATTACK ON THE SEVENTEENTH OF JULY.

(The events narrated in this chapter occur at the same time as those which are described in the last two. You will find that *Map 8* will be of great assistance to you in following the account of the German flank attack. The positions of the various regiments are shown, and their movements are indicated by dotted lines and arrow-heads.)

PRINCE LEBENFELD, as you will remember, has ordered his 3rd Army Corps to attack the British from the west, while the 2nd Army Corps—whose operations we have just viewed with Lieutenant Cairnes from Ways Ridge—occupies their attention by making a pretended attack from the south.

The 3rd Army Corps spends the night of the 16th–17th at Luttre, several miles south of Nivelles. In order to make this attack from the west, it has to march all the way to Witterzee. Altogether, it has to cover about sixteen miles before it even starts fighting.

You may here ask: Why does Prince Lebenfeld take the trouble to send a force such a long way round? Why not march straight ahead? He has over three men to every one of the British: surely he would be able to

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break through their lines if he gathered his men together in three or four places, bombarded vigorously with his 450 guns, and then threw his infantry in heavy masses against certain parts of his enemy's intrenchments?

Well, such a course might have succeeded in days of old, but only at great cost to the attacking troops. In modern warfare it would mean still more terrible losses to the assailants, even if they were eventually victorious. The reasons for this are the extraordinary accuracy and long range of modern rifles and field-guns, and the rapidity with which they can be fired, compared with those which were in use even so late as thirty years ago.

This improvement in weapons has given a small force of soldiers such an advantage that, if they are well placed so that they can see the ground for a mile in front of them, and are protected by lines of obstacles, and by trenches concealed from view as much as possible, they are equal to a far greater number of an attacking enemy. The latter has to pass over fields exposed to heavy fire, and strewn with wire entanglements and other obstacles; while the defenders are motionless, and can, consequently, conceal themselves.

For these reasons, a good general nowadays seldom thinks of attacking an enemy in front only—that is to say, of making a "frontal attack," pure and simple. No; he generally makes a pretence of attacking in front, while in reality he sends his strongest force to attack the defenders on one side—that is to say, to make a "flank attack."

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The defenders, of course, have to guard against this, and you will presently see how General French makes arrangements to resist the German flank attack.

At nine o'clock in the morning of the 17th, the leading men of the 3rd Army Corps reach Nivelles. Its two divisions are marching by separate roads, and at this moment, although their vanguards are entering Nivelles, their rearguards have not yet started from Luttre, seven and a half miles away.*

As the general enters the town, an officer gallops up to him and hands him a letter. The general opens and reads it. He finds that it is an order from the commander-in-chief, which runs as follows:—

"*The 2nd Army Corps has been ordered to make a feint attack on the British position between Ways and Noirhat. It will probably commence its attack at 2 p.m.*

"*The right of the British position rests on Trou-du-Bois. You will make a serious flank attack on that village from the west. Start your attack at four o'clock, by which time it is expected that the 2nd Army Corps will have succeeded in engaging the enemy's attention sufficiently to prevent him from sending reinforcements to resist your attack.*"

The general makes his plans. He determines to attack Trou-du-Bois simultaneously from two places—namely, from Nivelles with the 5th Division, and from Witterzee with the 6th Division.

By marching up the valley of the St. Pierre, and then through the village of Seigneur, the 6th Division will—

* A German army corps consists of two divisions, each of 12,000 infantry, 600 cavalry, and 72 guns. You will see the exact composition of the 3rd German Army Corps on page 489.

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as you can see from *Map 8*—be able to reach Witterzee, concealed by woods and hills from the view of the enemy at Trou-du-Bois. The German cavalry are already driving back the mounted troops of the British and sweeping their scouts from the proposed line of advance, so the general has strong hopes that his march will be unobserved, and that he will be able to take the British by surprise.

Witterzee, by the road he intends to follow, is nearly seven miles from Nivelles. If the 6th Division marches by two roads—a brigade on each *—it will be able to go faster than if it went by one only, and will take about two and a half hours to reach Witterzee. So, as the actual attack is not to start until four o'clock, there is no necessity to leave Nivelles before 1.30. However, it takes some time to extend men who are marching in a long column into attack formation, so the general allows another two hours, and fixes 11.30 as the time for starting from Nivelles.

Having arranged the hour of departure of the 6th Division, and told its commander, Lieutenant-General Eckstein, what he wishes done, he leaves the conduct of the operations entirely in his hands, merely ordering him to send constant reports of his progress to him at the 3rd Army Corps Headquarters at Nivelles.

The general then orders the commander of the 5th Division to leave one of his brigades at Nivelles, and

* The 6th Division consists of the 11th and 12th Brigades, each composed of two infantry regiments (3,000 men each), and two artillery regiments (12 batteries).

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to attack Trou-du-Bois with the other at the same time as the 6th Division starts its advance from Witterzee.

A perusal of the foregoing will give you a slight idea of the calculations which it is necessary to make when arranging plans for a battle. The time taken by all the marching and manœuvring which precede the actual fighting has to be carefully considered, especially if you have large bodies of men under your command, and wish them all to attack simultaneously at different points. In fact, there is a great deal of arithmetic in warfare! On the other hand, you must remember that every small accident means delay. He is a very lucky general, indeed, who does not have his plans upset by some unforeseen move on the part of his enemy, some unlooked-for mishap, or some freak of the weather. A stubborn resistance in an unexpected place, a broken bridge over a deep river, a sudden fog—any of these things may disarrange the most accurate calculations, and perhaps ruin the best-laid plans.

Now, let us follow the movements of the 3rd Army Corps.

It is twelve o'clock before the last man enters Nivelles. The two cavalry regiments of the corps do not halt in the town, but move straight through, as they have been ordered to cover the march of the infantry and artillery. To do this, they send strong patrols along the main road, which runs from Nivelles through Witterzee to Brussels, with the object of preventing the enemy's scouts from coming out to overlook the movements of the army corps.

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Long before the tail of the German column arrives at Nivelles, however, the head has resumed its march, for at 11.30 the infantry and artillery of the 6th Division move out of the place. As the Germans tramp along the dusty roads lying in the pretty, fertile valley of the St. Pierre River, they can hear their horse artillery guns firing far ahead of them, occupied in helping the cavalry division to drive in the British horsemen.

Two hours later, the vanguard of the 11th Brigade enters the main street of Seigneur, a little village concealed from the view of the British at Trou-du-Bois by a wood.

The positions of both the 11th and 12th Brigades at this moment are shown on the left-hand side of *Map 8*. As the former soon becomes engaged with the British, it will be of interest to glance at its present formation.

The 11th Brigade is composed of the XXIst and XXIInd Regiments, each consisting of three battalions of 1,000 men. (For the sake of convenience, each battalion is given a number on the map. For example—1st/XXIst means the 1st Battalion of the XXIst Regiment; 2nd/XXIst means the 2nd Battalion of the XXIst Regiment, etc.) The 11th Brigade is also accompanied by the 11th Artillery Regiment, which consists of six batteries.

The brigade is marching as follows (*see Map 8*):—The advanced guard consists of the 1st/XXIst and a battery of field artillery, and, as usual, is divided into two parts —the vanguard and mainguard. The former is composed

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of one company (250 men), and leads the march. Half a mile behind it comes the mainguard—namely, the other three companies of the battalion and the field battery.

The main body of the brigade follows three-quarters of a mile behind the advanced guard. The positions of the various regiments are shown on the map.

At the moment when the 11th Brigade is in the position shown on the map, a cyclist dashes down the road from Seigneur, and hands a note to Major Wickatz, who commands the 1st/XXIst, and also the whole of the advanced guard. The major is riding at the head of his mainguard, about half a mile from the village. He tears open the note, and reads:—

"*From the Commander of the Vanguard, 11th Brigade,*
to the Commander of the Advanced Guard, 11th Brigade.

SEIGNEUR WOOD,
1.20 p.m., July 17th.

The British infantry are in WITTERZEE: strength unknown. I have hidden my men in this wood. A squadron of the 3rd Cuirassiers is just leaving here. The major tells me he was ordered to watch WITTERZEE until our arrival, and then to rejoin his regiment. His scouts have made constant efforts to find out the enemy's strength, but were fired at whenever they approached the village.

(*Signed*) *A. Kranz, Captain, A Company, 1st/XXIst.*"

This news is annoying. It was known earlier in the day that Witterzee was occupied by some of the British; for the cavalry division had found them there, but had reported that "they were only a small party, and that they (the cavalry division) were going to turn them

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out." Major Wickatz had been informed of this message, but had not heard of the result of the attempt to "turn them out." Consequently, he now knows that the attempt must have been unsuccessful, and that the cavalry division, leaving the squadron mentioned by Captain Kranz to watch the place, must have continued its advance against the British cavalry to the north.

Major Wickatz has a difficult problem to solve. Put yourself in his place for a moment and try it.

You are in command of an advanced guard composed of a battalion and a battery. Your first duty is not to let any small body of the enemy stop your advance, or you will delay the march of the brigade behind you. But you do not know the strength of the enemy: he is concealed by the village buildings and orchards. On the one hand, he may be strong enough to swallow up your little force if you attack him; on the other, it is possible that he may be so weak that he will retreat at once. In either case, the moment he sees you he will send word to Trou-du-Bois that he has "seen the German infantry." From that, the British will guess that a force is coming to attack them from the direction of Witterzee, and all hope of effecting a surprise will be at an end. What do you think you ought to do?

Major Wickatz makes up his mind very quickly—first, because there is no time to spare; and second, because German officers are trained to think quickly. He sends the following message to Brigadier Sulz, who commands the 11th Brigade:—

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"*To G.O.C. 11th Brigade,*
from Advanced Guard Commander.

SEIGNEUR,
1.45 p.m., July 17th.

The British are in WITTERZEE. I am going to attack them.

(*Signed*) *A. Wickatz, Major, 1st/XXIst.*"

He then orders the mainguard to press forward, and gallops off himself to Seigneur Wood. Reaching the spur behind the wood, where he finds the vanguard company halted, he dismounts and inspects Witterzee through his field-glasses.

The village is about a mile away—a long, straggling line of houses lying in a wide valley on both sides of the highroad. A broad belt of orchards and hedged-in gardens partly conceals the buildings from his view. At present there is no sign of life about the place, but the whistling of two or three bullets through the air contradicts the impression given by its peaceful appearance, and warns him that the British are on the alert.

Attack on Witterzee by the Advanced Guard of the 11th Brigade.

The advanced guard battery arrives at 2 p.m. Major Wickatz orders it to come into action and shell Witterzee. The appearance of the German guns on the spur draws some shots from the village; but the distance is too great for rifle fire to be very accurate, so that but little damage is done.

While the field-guns bombard the village with shrapnel shells, showering down bullets on buildings and hedgerows in search of the skilfully concealed enemy, the

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1st/XXIst assembles behind Seigneur Wood, and prepares to advance in fighting formation.

The attack is started by A Company. The thirty best shots in the company are sent towards Witterzee. These thirty men act as skirmishers and scouts. They advance in a long, irregular line, and by creeping from one piece of cover to another, approach as close as they can to the British. Here they lie concealed as well as the ground will allow, pick off the enemy's men with their accurate fire, and try to find out where they are posted, so as to be able to give the information to the main body of the attackers, which is following them.

When the skirmishers have got about two hundred yards' start, half of A Company advances in a line about a quarter of a mile long, the men four yards apart. When this line has gone about three hundred yards, the other half of A advances, extended in exactly the same way. Other half companies follow, until the whole of A and B Companies are pressing forward to the attack in four long, thin lines, one behind the other, three hundred yards between each. (The way in which the Germans attack is similar to that shown in *Fig. 25*, page 151.)

At first there is very little rifle firing by either side. The Germans are well scattered, there is plenty of cover, and the range is too great for the British to care to throw away their ammunition. The latter, too, are invisible, so the attackers do not waste their time by firing, but continue to advance steadily. Only the "crack shots" of

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both sides fire occasionally when they catch a glimpse of an opponent. The German battery keeps up its bombardment.

When the first line of attackers gets within one thousand yards of the village, it emerges on to a bare, open field without a vestige of cover. The British fire instantly increases, and a series of well-aimed volleys sweeps the field from end to end. Captain Kranz urges his men on, and breaking into a run, they make a wild dash forward. But they drop rapidly, and finally reaching a broad ditch bounding the far side of the field, the Germans pile into it, take shelter behind its banks, and open a steady fire on the hedges of Witterzee, now only eight hundred yards away—less than half a mile.

But without any apparent effect, for there is no visible opponent to aim at, and the British fire kills and wounds many of the second line which is now advancing over the bare field just crossed by the first. Presently the second line also reaches the ditch, and the whole of A Company is now united. But it has lost heavily in that last 200 yards, and scarcely musters 180 men out of 250.

For the next five minutes the Germans keep up a furious fusillade on the village. The British fire seems to decrease in intensity. Captain Kranz orders his bugler to sound the advance, and the whole of his company climbs out of the ditch and again moves towards the enemy, this time in one line.

Again the Germans are greeted with a hot fire from the rifles of the defenders; a machine gun opens on them

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from behind the hedges of the village, and shrapnel shells begin to burst in the air overhead from some invisible British battery.* Men fall on every side, and it is only by dint of the greatest efforts on the part of its officers that A Company succeeds in reaching a hollow lane, about five feet deep, running parallel to the village, and six hundred yards away from it. Lining the edge of this lane (which is not shown on the map), the Germans again open a hot fire on the British.

At this moment there is an increased roar from the artillery near Seigneur. Shells rain down on the buildings, orchards, and hedges of Witterzee. The remainder of the batteries of the brigade have galloped up and joined the advanced guard battery on the spur.

The whole of the 11th Artillery Regiment is now in action, and under the combined bombardment of its thirty-six guns, the British rifle fire dies away until only an occasional bullet whistles over the heads of the Germans in the road. Taking advantage of this lull, B, C, and D Companies, which have been steadily following the first in a series of half-company lines, press forward rapidly and join A. By three o'clock the whole of the 1st/XXIst are gathered together in the hollow lane 600 yards from the British, having lost 200 men in the hour which has elapsed since the fight began.

A pause of about a quarter of an hour now occurs in the advance, while Major Wickatz reorganizes his battalion

* The 63rd Field Battery, which is stationed between Bruyère and Napoleon's Wood.

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in the shelter of the road, and a torrent of bullets and shells is poured on the village. Finally, he gives the order to resume the attack, and A Company once more advances in an extended line, the other three companies remaining for the present in the lane.

This time only a few bullets greet the reappearance of the Germans. They advance rapidly: half the distance is covered, and still only a straggling fire comes from the British. Three hundred yards from the village, A Company stops: the shells from the German field-guns at Seigneur are bursting over the ground in front, and the men can advance no further. They lie down and fire at the hedges, while B and C Companies come up in succession from the road and join them.

Another pause occurs; another storm of shot and shell devastates the village. Then the German batteries cease firing. The three companies rise, fix bayonets, and charge forward with a many-tongued shout.

For one moment it looks as if the British have retreated. The German officers wave their swords, and cheer on their men, full of anxiety lest their enemy has escaped them, and—

Bang! crash! A deafening roar fills the air, and a hail of lead from machine guns and rifles literally sweeps away the leading ranks of the attackers.

The German losses are terrible. They are on a bare ploughed field within one hundred yards of the enemy—point-blank range—and are in a thick line, as troops must be when they are making a final charge. More than half

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the men go down at the first discharge. The remainder throw themselves flat on their faces, wriggling into plough furrows, and feverishly raking hollows in the soft earth with their hands, in which to shelter themselves from the blast of that awful tempest.

The attack by the advanced guard has proved a complete failure. The fire of the thirty-six guns has evidently not succeeded in driving the British out of the village, or even in doing them very much damage, so well concealed are they by trees, hedges, and buildings.

The failure of the attack has resulted in more than mere loss in killed and wounded. It has warned the British that the German infantry are in the neighbourhood of Witterzee, and they have plenty of time to make preparations for meeting an attack on Trou-du-Bois from the west. In fact, the great flank attack planned by Prince Lebenfeld can no longer come as a surprise to the British, which is a very great disadvantage to the Germans. So you see how one plan, at any rate, of the day's operations has been frustrated by a stubborn resistance in an unexpected place by six hundred mounted infantrymen—for that is all the garrison of Witterzee consists of!

The 6th Division takes up the Attack on Witterzee.

While the 1st/XXIst has thus been vigorously engaged with the enemy, the remainder of the 11th and 12th Brigades have been steadily advancing along the roads to Seigneur. At three o'clock, when the final assault ends in disaster,

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the leading battalions have assembled in the sheltered ground around the village, and the remainder are coming up one by one.

Lieutenant-General Eckstein, commanding the division, and his two brigadiers, arrive on the scene of action during the progress of the attack by the advanced guard. Everything appears to be going satisfactorily, so the general does not interfere; but when the last charge results in disastrous failure, he at once takes steps to remedy the misfortune. He orders the 11th Brigade to get ready to attack, the 12th Brigade to remain at Seigneur as a reserve, and both the artillery regiments to bombard the village.

The 12th Artillery Regiment thereupon takes up a position south of Seigneur Wood, and joins its fire to that of the 11th. The Germans have now 54 guns and 18 field howitzers in action against Witterzee. The cannonade is terrific. The air about the village is thick with the smoke of bursting shells, and the British have a warm time. But the poor fellows of the 1st/XXIst lying close to Witterzee also suffer, and many of them are killed by the shrapnel fire of their own guns.

While this artillery bombardment is going on, preparations are being made for the attack of the 11th Brigade. Brigadier Sulz, commanding the 11th, divides his attack into two parts—a frontal attack, and a flank attack.

The 2nd/XXIst and 3rd/XXIst form the frontal attack. When the artillery have fired for half an hour,

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each battalion advances in four lines, one behind the other, and from 300 to 400 yards apart. Each line consists of a company of 250 men, who advance at intervals of four or five yards. They move over the ground previously traversed by the 1st Battalion, and leave many dead and wounded to add to the bodies which are already strewn over the fields, and which mark with melancholy clearness the path of the advanced guard in its ill-fated attack.

Practically no rifle fire assails them, but the British field batteries near Trou-du-Bois shell them vigorously during their advance. Consequently they make slow progress, and it is close on 5 p.m. before the 2nd/XXIst arrives within three hundred yards of the village, where its advance is stopped by the fire of its own artillery. The 3rd/XXIst comes up behind, and posts itself in the hollow lane which the 1st Battalion made such good use of in its attack. A hot rifle fire is now joined to the artillery bombardment, while the XXIst Regiment waits for the signal to assault.

Meanwhile the XXIInd Regiment has been getting into position to deliver the flank attack ordered by Brigadier Sulz. Its 1st and 2nd Battalions start from Seigneur at 3.15, the same moment at which the artillery opens its final bombardment of Witterzee. The direction which they follow is shown on *Map 8*.

At first they move over sheltered ground in "column of route formation"—that is, four men abreast; but presently, when they get on to Seigneur Hill, about half

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a mile south of the wood, they emerge on to some gently undulating ground which is exposed to the view of the Guards at Trou-du-Bois, two and a half miles away.

The British 4·7's and 15-pounders immediately open fire on the XXIInd, and compel it to scatter in extended order. Both battalions then advance in a series of company lines, in much the same way as the XXIst Regiment does. This causes some delay, to begin with; and afterwards the country is so open, and the British fire so accurate, that the Germans are only able to advance very slowly. The 12th Artillery Regiment detaches three batteries to support the XXIInd, but with very little result; for try as much as they can, the German gunners are unable to discover the position of the British batteries which are harassing their infantry. They know that the guns must be somewhere on a high hill which they can see away to the east (Bois Hill), but actually see them they cannot.

As a matter of fact, the British batteries are carefully masked by hedges, which conceal them and prevent the flash of the guns from being seen. The sun, too, is shining full on the western face of Bois Hill, and illuminating the hedges and orchards with a flood of light, which also tends to make it more difficult for the Germans to see the flashes of flame when the guns are fired. If it was slightly darker, the flashes would show up plainly, and the positions of the British batteries would be revealed.

Consequently the German artillery has no success

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whatever in its efforts to subdue the fire of the British guns. In fact the latter disregard the German batteries altogether, and devote themselves to the infantry. In spite, however, of the incessant fire to which it is exposed, the XXIInd continues its advance, and does not lose so many men as one would expect, considering the number of shells which burst over it.

At last the Germans reach the railway from Witterzee to Nivelles, and turn to the left to attack the former place. They are now advancing north in a series of lines, the ends of which point towards Trou-du-Bois. Consequently they make a far better target for the British gunners at that place—they are, in fact, exposed to "enfilade fire," and they get it too. The XXIInd begins to lose heavily, and finally assembles in the shelter of the cutting in which the railway runs.

The 1st Battalion now advances rapidly along the cutting, and presently emerges on the hillside sloping toward Witterzee, where it quickly extends into the usual lines of attack, and moves towards the village, the nearest houses of which are now only a quarter of a mile away.

As the 1st/XXIInd appears on the hillside, the German artillery near Seigneur stops firing, the XXIst pours in a final volley, and both regiments press forward.

No fire greets them; they enter the village unmolested. Save for a few wounded men, the place is deserted. The colonel of the Mounted Infantry Battalion has been warned by his scouts of the approach of the XXIInd Regiment,

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and knowing that he has not enough men to resist an attack from two sides at once, has ordered a retreat. His four companies have withdrawn quietly and skilfully one by one, and by the time the Germans make their final charge, the British are safely behind Newcourt Wood.

For eight hours the mounted infantrymen, 550 strong after yesterday's skirmishes, have made a gallant and obstinate defence. From nine to one they resisted all the attempts of the German cavalry and horse artillery to turn them out of the village. Since then they have kept the whole of the 11th Brigade at bay, though outnumbered by ten to one.

You will have noticed, however, that they retire as soon as they find out that the Germans are going to make a flank attack on them from the south. They feel quite capable of resisting any number of frontal attacks, for they can always ride rapidly away if too hard pressed, as their horses are behind the village, ready saddled; but a flank attack—well, that is quite another matter, for it threatens to cut off their retreat. So they steal away unobserved, having most successfully obeyed their general's order—to delay the enemy, and avoid being captured.

As a matter of fact, the mounted infantry have been favoured by fortune. If Major Wickatz's advanced guard had not delivered the attack which ended so disastrously, but had waited for the rest of the brigade to come up, the Germans would have driven the little

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British force out by sheer weight of numbers in the very first assault. As it was, the mounted infantrymen impressed the 1st XXIst by the successful way in which they repulsed its attack; and playing a game of bluff after that, deceived the German general by making him think that they were much stronger than they really were. The whole engagement is an example of the value of smokeless powder to a force defending a position masked by hedges and trees; the old-fashioned powder would have betrayed the exact locality of the British to the German artillery, and would have revealed the fact that they were a small body of men.

It is 5.30 p.m. by the time the Germans enter Witterzee. The 12th Brigade at once advances to Seigneur Wood, and both artillery regiments limber up and move forward to assist with their fire the further attack of the 11th Brigade on Trou-du-Bois.

The remainder of the day's operations we will watch from our old standpoint on Bois Hill, within the Guards' lines.

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CHAPTER XXI.

THE GERMAN FLANK ATTACK ON THE SEVENTEENTH OF JULY.

(*Continued.*)

The Attack on the Guards' Position.

(This chapter describes how the 3rd German Army Corps, whose movements you have just been following in the last chapter, attack the Guards at Trou-du-Bois on the evening of July 17th. The exact position of the Guards is shown on *Map 9*, but the course of the fight is shown on *Map 8*, so that both maps will be of use to you when reading the following description.

Remember that while this fight is going on, the infantry of the 2nd Army Corps are attacking the villages on the Dyle. You read about this in Chapters XVIII. and XIX.)

UNTIL the German XXIInd Regiment appears on Seigneur Hill, the Guards spend a quiet day at Trou-du-Bois.

Here and there parties of men are busy improving the defences. They take good care not to expose themselves to the view of the German scouts, who are scattered over the country to the westward; for if the latter should see them working, they would be able to report to their general the exact positions of the various intrenchments. So the Guards satisfy themselves with putting the finishing touches to their fortified houses, deepening those trenches

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which lie behind hedges or buildings, and making "splinter-proofs" in which to shelter themselves from shrapnel bullets.*

After their lucky shot at the German horse artillery battery early this morning, the gunners do not fire their "four-point-sevens" again for several hours. Occasionally they get a chance of aiming at some distant scout, but refrain from firing. One man is not worth a shell; besides which, the more they fire, the more chance has the enemy of discovering the positions of the guns. So the R.A. officers employ themselves in taking the range of every conspicuous point in the surrounding country. By doing this with their range-finders, as well as measuring the distance on the large maps which they have procured from the Belgian War Department, they get very accurate results, and will know exactly at what range to fire should the enemy appear near any of these points.

Sentries keep a vigilant look-out from the trenches, and patrols constantly creep cautiously out to search Baulers and the neighbouring farmhouses (*Map 8*) for the enemy's scouts, and to give timely warning of the approach of any large force.

Very early in the morning, two wagons of the Balloon Section, Royal Engineers, arrive at Bruyère. One of them contains a balloon, which is filled with gas taken from long iron tubes in the other wagon, and is then sent up with a sapper subaltern, armed with a powerful telescope,

* Splinter-proofs are trenches roofed over with wood and earth, something like what is shown in *Fig. 40*, page 249.

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sitting in the car. As the balloon ascends, a rope which is attached to it slowly unwinds itself from around a big drum in the wagon, by means of which it can be hauled down when necessary.

From a height of about eleven hundred feet the subaltern gets a good view of the whole country, except the bottoms of distant valleys, and is able to telephone down some valuable information regarding the movements of the enemy's cavalry. He soon becomes the target of some German horse artillery guns concealed in the closely hedged-in ground towards Nivelles. A balloon is a difficult target to get the range of, and it is probable that, in spite of the German guns, the young sapper would have discovered the German 6th Division on its march to Seigneur had it not been for the wind. This is fairly strong when he goes up, but by eight o'clock it increases to such an extent that observation becomes impossible. The car sways about in such a dangerous and violent manner that the subaltern is quite unable to keep his gaze fixed on any objects beneath him, much less to search the distant country with his telescope. He remains up for some considerable time, but is finally compelled to descend.

You have already read how the Germans also failed to make any use of their balloon on Thyle Ridge this morning; so you see how the rough weather deprives both armies of the services of these valuable means of observation, on a day, too, when the information obtained through them would have been of great assistance to both generals.

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During the whole morning the noise of distant firing in the west tells the Guards of skirmishes between the British and German cavalry. At 9.30 the sound of a steady fusillade from Witterzee shows that the mounted infantry are being attacked. This is repeated at intervals; but, although the village itself is in full view, the shape of the ground prevents the Guards from seeing its assailants, except when they show themselves on Seigneur Hill. The 1st M.I., however, signal the news to General Carey, who commands the Guards Brigade, that the enemy only consists of horsemen; so the brigadier concludes that they are merely strong reconnoitring parties hunting for information. The M.I. will be able to keep them back, therefore he does not order his brigade to man the trenches. To do so too early would be to worry the men needlessly. The result is that the Guards eat their dinners comfortably in the houses and villages where they are quartered, although the firing continues at Witterzee, only a mile away.

General Carey has just finished his lunch in Ellencourt Farmhouse, when his brigade-major hands him the following message from the colonel of the Scots Guards:—

"*TROU-DU-BOIS,*
12.40 p.m., July 17th.

One of my patrols was captured in BAULERS at 12.5 p.m. One man escaped. He reports that the German infantry are in BAULERS: strength about 200."

A few minutes later two more reports come in. The first runs:—

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"12.42 p.m.—Scouts report that a large party of Germans entered BAULERS at 12.17 p.m. Strength about 1,000 infantry and 6 field-guns."

The last report says:—

"12.44 p.m.—Heavy dust cloud visible above the trees near the NIVELLES-BAULERS road. It looks as if it were made by a large force of infantry."

General Carey pieces together the information given in these three messages. The small force which captured the patrol is probably the vanguard, and the party mentioned in the second report the mainguard, of the large body of Germans which is stirring up the dust cloud described in the third report. The first party is said to be about 200 strong; the second, about 1,000. Altogether 1,200 men and six guns. "That is about the size of the advanced guard of an infantry brigade," thinks the brigadier. "The Germans are going to make a flank attack on me from Baulers." *

He promptly orders the trenches to be manned, and proceeds himself to Bois Hill, close by the farm. In less than a quarter of an hour the Guards are in position, and ready for the enemy.

Meanwhile the firing at Witterzee has been gradually increasing in intensity, and shells are now bursting over the village. The colonel of the mounted infantry signals to General Carey that the enemy are making a determined

* The brigadier has guessed accurately. The force is the 9th Brigade, which you remember has been ordered to attack Trou-du-Bois from Baulers when the 6th Division reaches Witterzee.

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attempt to turn him out, but that so far they consist only of cavalry and horse artillery.

At 2.15, however, the brigadier receives the following signal :—

"*WITTERZEE,*
2.10 p.m., July 17th.

The enemy's infantry are showing themselves near SEIGNEUR WOOD."

This is important news. It shows that the Germans are not only preparing to make a flank attack from Baulers, but are also going to advance through Witterzee as well. You will see from *Map 8* how this threatens the British position, for the Germans will now be able to march round Trou-du-Bois and attack the Guards from the rear.

The map will also show you what an effective step General Carey takes to prevent this movement when he sends off the following message by a cyclist :—

"*To the O.C. 2nd Royal West Kent Regiment,*
NORTH BRUYERE.

BOIS HILL,
2.25 p.m., July 17th.

The enemy's infantry is at SEIGNEUR. Your battalion will occupy NAPOLEON'S WOOD. I have ordered the 23rd Field Company, R.E., to assist you in fortifying it."

General Carey also at once informs General Rundle, who commands the 1st Division, of what he has done. The latter orders the 1st Field Battery and the 37th Howitzer Battery to leave the Highland Brigade and place themselves under General Carey's orders.

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The Royal West Kent Regiment are in Napoleon's Wood before three o'clock, and for the next three hours are busily engaged in fortifying its west and north edges with trenches. The 1st Field Battery comes up behind the wood, ready to move out and shell the Germans should they try to get round the north end. The major of the 37th Battery places his howitzers behind the ridge joining Napoleon's Wood to Bruyère. He himself takes up a position in Newcourt Wood, from which he can see the effect of his shells, and signal to his gunners where to fire to, as, of course, they cannot see the ground around Witterzee.

From 2.30 to 5.30 the Guards listen to the intermittent muttering of rifle fire as the fight between the Germans and the M.I. rages around Witterzee, and watch the enemy's shells bursting over the village. They take no part in the action themselves, but the 63rd Battery joins early in the battle.

Let us see how this battery manages its fire.

From their carefully intrenched and concealed position near North Bruyère, the officers of the 63rd can see the German batteries near Seigneur, two and three-quarter miles away; but their view of the valley up which the German infantry (the 1st/XXIst) are advancing is blocked by the long spur running out from Bois Hill towards Witterzee.

In order to see where to fire to, the major of the 63rd gallops off to the western corner of Newcourt Wood, accompanied by his two range-takers and a couple of

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signallers. Lying hidden among the trees, he gets a capital view of the advancing infantry. His range-takers, close by, measure the distance between the Germans and themselves by taking angles with their instruments, and tell him what it is. The major already knows the distance between himself and his battery, so by means of a little sum he quickly calculates the distance between the battery and the first line of Germans.

He finds it is 3,800 yards; his signaller at once signals "3,800" to the battery. One gun fires a shell fitted with a percussion fuse. (*See page 40.*) The shell bursts, and makes a little cloud of smoke when it hits the ground. The major notices that it falls about 100 yards to the left of the Germans—their left—and a little behind them. He orders his signaller to send the message, "Aim 100 yards to the left of the last shot. Range, 3,600." *

The next shot bursts on the ground a little in front of the Germans, so the major sends the message, "Last shot all right. Fire shrapnel at 3,600." All the guns thereupon commence firing in turn, and their shrapnel shells sail over the houses of Witterzee, burst in the air in front of the Germans, and shower bullets on them. Occasionally the major sends a signal to alter the range. For instance, he orders two of his guns to fire at 4,000 yards, in order to hit the second and third lines of Germans, which are following the first.

* The messages sent by the major are here given simply, so as to be intelligible to the reader. As a matter of fact they are really worded quite differently—in technical language which it would serve no useful purpose to explain here.

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In a similar manner, the British gunners on Bois Hill keep up a steady fire with the lyddite shells from their 4·7's. Their target is the German artillery near Seigneur Wood, two and a half miles away, and they make excellent practice. They have, however, some difficulty in finding the correct range; for whenever one of those terrifying, high-explosive shells bursts near a German battery, the latter immediately shifts its position, the next shot usually falling in the place just vacated. In spite of this, the British 4·7's succeed in destroying three of the German guns.

Towards four o'clock, a large body of the enemy appears about two and a half miles away on the top of Seigneur Hill. This is the XXIInd Regiment making its flank attack on Witterzee, which you read about at the end of the last chapter. The 4·7's immediately turn their attention to them. At first they use lyddite shells; but having got the range, they change to large shrapnel, and force the enemy to scatter. Later on, the 64th Battery gets a chance, and joins in the fight.

Soon after five, a company of mounted infantrymen appears behind the houses at Witterzee, mounts, and gallops up the valley. Circling around Newcourt Farm, where the sappers are busy constructing a wire entanglement along the edge of Napoleon's Wood, the company passes along the front of the Royal West Kent Regiment, and halts behind Newcourt Wood. It is followed at brief intervals by the other three companies, and the whole battalion, with its two machine guns, is presently assembled behind the wood. It then trots off to the north to Mon

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Souhait Farm, to assist the 12th Lancers in keeping the enemy's cavalry from getting round the end of the British position. (*Map 8.*)

Shortly after the last mounted infantryman is out of Witterzee, the dark uniforms of the enemy show at the edge of the village. General Carey sends a message to the 37th Battery to bombard the place, and presently the howitzers are dropping shells with persistent regularity among the houses, hedgerows, and orchards.

At six o'clock numerous German batteries begin to show themselves on Seigneur Hill and the hill beyond Fonteny. (*Map 8.*) The British 4·7's meet them with a steady fire as they advance, appearing and disappearing over hill and into valley. When they arrive within three miles of Trou-du-Bois, some of the batteries halt and open fire on the British, whose position is now fairly well known to the Germans, although they cannot actually see the men and guns themselves. Other batteries continue their advance, until, by six o'clock, they arrive within easy shrapnel range of the British 15-pounders.

The right of the British line is soon the centre of a most terrific fire. From Lannoy Ridge on the south, around by Seigneur Hill to Ophain on the north, no less than forty-eight batteries—two hundred and eighty-eight guns—are ranged in an irregular line about two miles away. Two hundred and fifty-two guns concentrate their fire on Trou-du-Bois, and thirty-six shell Newcourt Wood, which is held by the Carabiniers.*

* See positions of 9th to 16th Regiments on *Map 8.*

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The German fire can only be described as nothing short of infernal. Their gunners can see no enemy or intrenchments to aim at, but they drop their shells backwards and forwards, right and left, with the object of showering bullets over the whole of the ground where they suppose the British to be. The village of Trou-du-Bois is a special mark for their guns. The houses are terribly battered, and many catch fire. The Guards have, however, expected this; barrels of water and piles of earth for throwing on the flames have been placed in the rooms of all the houses which they intend to defend, and special parties have been told off to put out fires. These do their work well, in spite of the enemy's shells; but, notwithstanding their efforts, several of the buildings are reduced to ruins.

It is fortunate for the British that there is a strong breeze; otherwise, the smoke made by the bursting shells, especially those of the German howitzers, would prevent them from seeing the enemy at all.

Considering the intensity of the German artillery fire, it is wonderful what little damage is actually done to the British troops. The infantry shelter themselves in their trenches and splinter-proofs; only a few marksmen line the parapets, and keep up a steady and accurate fire on the enemy's guns.

These make a fine target; for, following the tactics they adopted against the French in 1870, the Germans have "massed" their artillery, which means that their batteries are placed alongside each other in long lines. On Seigneur

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Hill, for instance, the line of guns is over one and a quarter miles long, for there are eighteen batteries in action there. This arrangement has the advantage that one officer can command all these one hundred and eight guns, and can concentrate the whole of their fire on any particular point of the enemy's position which the infantry are to attack. On the other hand, the line of guns on Seigneur Hill makes a grand target for the British artillery; for although several of the batteries have managed to hide themselves from view, yet it has been found impossible to conceal all.

The British gunners make a splendid fight. Thanks to their careful preparations, their guns are invisible. Naturally, some of the many shells which fall on the hill burst among them; yet, on the whole, they lose very few of their number, and are able to maintain a steady fire.

It is a curious spectacle, this duel between the rival gunners, and the first of its kind that the world has ever seen. The British have all the batteries of their 1st Division engaged—namely, the 63rd, 64th, and 73rd near Trou-du-Bois, and the 7th, 14th, and 66th near Bruyère. Also the 100th Heavy and 37th Howitzer Batteries. Against these the Germans have two hundred and fifty-two guns, which number does not include the the 11th Artillery Regiment, at present employed in shelling Newcourt Wood.

It seems too unequal—surely the British guns must be beaten into silence!

But they are not, and for a very good reason. Every

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one of their guns is invisible to the Germans, while more than half of the German guns are in full view of the British. That is the great advantage which an army defending a position has over an army attacking it; and that advantage is almost entirely due to the smokeless powder which is used nowadays, and does not betray the position of a gun when it is fired.

Far from being silenced, the British guns do great execution among the German batteries. The shrapnel of the 15-pounders deals out death and wounds to the enemy's gunners, and the lyddite shells of the 4·7's and howitzers destroy gun carriages and ammunition wagons. Single pieces, even whole batteries, are silenced for a time, only to re-open fire later; for the German gunner is second only to his British rival in the gallant and obstinate way in which he fights his guns.

The British, however, do not escape scot free. Besides the occasional stray shrapnel shells which secure several victims apiece, a lucky shot from a concealed howitzer behind Baulers lands right under a 4·7, and damages it so severely that it is silent for the rest of the day.

At about half-past six, German infantrymen begin to show themselves outside Witterzee. Long lines of men advance in skirmishing order up the valley and along the spur which juts out from Trou-du-Bois to the north-west. Another force moves against Newcourt Wood from behind Witterzee. At about the same time, the Scots Guards see a number of heads appearing on the sky-line of Baulers spur, and also catch occasional glimpses of

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figures moving among the hedges and trees of the enclosed country in the valley of the Thiner River.

The 37th, 63rd, and 64th Batteries at once turn their attention to this new enemy, and shell them with dogged persistence. The range of every point has been accurately taken during the day, and as the distance both to Witterzee and Baulers is under one and a half miles, the fire of the British guns is very deadly.

One by one the various companies of the Guards line their trenches, and open a steady fusillade as the enemy approaches within a mile of them. The Germans advance very slowly. At first, as far as can be seen from Trou-du-Bois, they move in long, regular lines, the men several paces apart. Under the combined rifle and shrapnel fire of the British, these lines soon gather into little knots of men. Some collect in hollows, and then make dashes across the open spaces lying between them and the next piece of cover. Others crawl forward on hands and knees through long grass, vegetables, or corn.

Newcourt Wood is captured by the enemy at 7.30. The Carabiniers have been told not to defend it very obstinately. They hold out for an hour, and then retire rapidly by squadrons behind Napoleon's Wood, where they halt and watch the country to the north. The Germans at once intrench themselves in Newcourt Wood, and exchange a heavy fire with the men of the Royal West Kent Regiment across the open strip of ground separating them from Napoleon's Wood. By thus fortifying Newcourt Wood, the Germans make a "strong

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point" at which they may be able to resist any attempt by the British to make a counter-attack round the north end of Napoleon's Wood.

By 7.30 the Germans of the XXIInd Regiment, who are advancing from Witterzee, have approached to within half a mile of the Guards' trenches at Trou-du-Bois. Further than that they will not move. And it is not surprising, for they have been fighting or marching since five o'clock this morning, and are dead beat.

After half-past seven, the German XVIIth Regiment from Baulers is the only part of the attacking force which is still advancing. It is moving towards the village of Trou-du-Bois, the south-west end of which now seems to be the chief target of the enemy's artillery, judging by the heavy increase in the number of shells which fall around it. The German general has evidently decided to make his chief effort here, and has ordered all his guns to concentrate their fire on this corner of the village, to pave the way for an infantry assault.

Under the terrific fire of the German artillery, the Scots Guards are fairly driven to the bottom of their trenches. Their rifle fire practically ceases, and the enemy pushes rapidly forward.

Soon after eight, the sun sets in a sullen sky which seems to promise a heavy storm. The light begins to fade slowly, and the flashes of exploding shells gradually show brighter and brighter.

Presently the British officers become aware that the enemy has shifted the direction of his fire—the shells fall

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further and further to the eastward, towards Bruyère. Finally, none fall on Trou-du-Bois at all.

The critical moment has come. Whistles shriek along the line; the Scots Guards rise from their trenches and man the parapets. As they do so, a storm of hoarse shouting rises in front, and a great, dark mass bears down on them in the gathering dusk.

The Guards' trenches break into a sheet of flame; machine guns are hastily dragged from their shelters, and deadly streams of bullets are poured on the advancing swarm; the 64th Battery loads with case-shot,* and fires as fast as breech can open and shut.

The Germans reel under this heavy blow; whole ranks are swept away. For a moment they press on; but flesh and blood cannot stand such a tempest. The men waver, and then stop; some turn and fly, but the larger number throw themselves flat on their faces. Not one reaches the line of obstacles a hundred yards from the trenches.

"Bring up the reserve!" shouts the colonel, and the next minute G and H Companies of the Scots are running through the village street in a long column. As they reach the trenches, they form into a thick line, fixing bayonets as they do so. A bugler sounds the "charge," the regimental pipers skirl out a stirring Scottish air, and with a wild cheer two hundred brawny Scots dash forward. Through a wide gap left in the line of entanglements they rush, and the next instant are among the enemy. The

* A case-shot is a thin metal cylinder filled with two hundred bullets. It bursts the moment it leaves the gun, and projects the bullets in a shower up to a distance of about a quarter of a mile.

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latter rise; there is a short, tough struggle; the Germans on either side endeavour to join in, but are brought to earth again by the rifles of the men in the trenches. They fly in all directions, leaving many prisoners in the hands of the British.

The gathering darkness puts an end to the fight. The 9th Brigade withdraws its scattered remnants to Baulers, which it roughly fortifies. The battalion of the XXIst Regiment in Newcourt Wood improves its trenches, and places sentries at the edge of the wood.

The XXIInd Regiment lies where the rifles of the Coldstreams and West Kent brought its advance to a stop. In the dusk, the officers restore order among their disorganized lines, and when darkness conceals them from the view of the British, set them to work at making a long trench. Double sentries are placed several yards in front, and, digging and delving, the XXIInd finishes up a day of severe marching and fighting with some hard work with the shovel. Behind it, the pioneers of the 3rd Army Corps are busy fortifying Witterzee, which is occupied by the 12th Brigade.

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CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE ARMY IS SUPPLIED WITH AMMUNITION, AND HOW THE WOUNDED MEN ARE CARED FOR, DURING THE BATTLE OF JULY THE SEVENTEENTH.

UNDER ordinary circumstances, every infantry soldier carries 100 rifle cartridges in his bandolier and pouches. The four carts and two mules of his battalion follow behind him with 68 boxes, each holding 1,100 rounds. This is a sufficient number to give every soldier 77 extra cartridges. (*See Fig. 2, page 16.*) In order to show you how these reach him during a battle, I will describe the way in which the Guards Brigade was supplied with ammunition during the German attack on Trou-du-Bois, about which you read in the last chapter.

On *Map 9* you will see some troops, called the "Brigade Ammunition Reserve," shown near North Bruyère. This reserve consists of two ammunition carts from each of the four battalions of Guards, and is under the command of a Captain Brett. The other carts and the mules are placed near the intrenchments of their battalions, as shown on the map. For instance, the carts and mules of the Coldstreams are stationed behind an orchard close

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to Ellencourt Farm, those of the Scots Guards are behind Trou-du-Bois village, and so on.

As the colonel of the Coldstreams expects that there will be some fighting during the day, he orders 50 cartridges to be served out on the morning of the 17th to each man from the carts near Ellencourt Farm. The Guardsmen place these in their haversacks, so that they take their places in the trenches with 150 rounds each.

This completely empties one of the carts, so it is sent off to the Brigade Ammunition Reserve, which immediately dispatches another cart to take its place. As the other battalions do the same as the Coldstreams, Captain Brett soon finds that four out of his eight carts are empty. How he replaces these I will describe presently.

During the fighting each company is supplied with ammunition by one of its sergeants and two men. These carry up the cartridges in brown canvas bags holding 600. This is hard work, for the men have to crouch and crawl in order to avoid being seen by the enemy, and, besides, 600 cartridges is a fairly heavy weight to carry. As soon as a cart is empty, it goes off to the Reserve, and Captain Brett sends another to take its place.

Now, how does Captain Brett replace his empty carts? In order to see this, you must look for a moment at *Fig. 20*, pages 66, 67.

Among the "Divisional Troops" of the 1st Division you will see a symbol labelled the "1st Division Ammunition Column," and among the "Corps Troops" one called the "Ammunition Park."

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The 1st Divisional Ammunition Column—I will call it the 1st D.A.C. for shortness—consists of about 60 vehicles. It is commanded by an artillery officer, and worked by artillerymen. It carries 646,800 cartridges for the infantry of the 1st Division, and about 2,700 shrapnel shells for the artillery. There are also some spare artillery drivers, horses, and 15-pounder carriages to replace casualties in the batteries.

The Ammunition Park carries spare ammunition for the whole army corps. It consists chiefly of spare artillery drivers and horses, 60 artillery wagons carrying over 8,000 shrapnel shells, and 42 wagons holding over 1½ million cartridges for rifles and machine guns.

Whenever Captain Brett finds that four of the carts in the Brigade Ammunition Reserve which he commands are empty, he orders one of his men, who is stationed on the back slopes of Bruyère Hill, to signal the following message to Maransart (*see Map 8*), near which place the 1st D.A.C. is posted:—"Send up four carts to the Guards Brigade."

When these carts arrive at Bruyère, the horses are taken out and hooked in to the empty carts, which they take off to the D.A.C.

In a similar way the Ammunition Reserve of the Highland Brigade draws its spare ammunition from the 1st D.A.C.

When the latter runs short of ammunition, the artillery major in command sends a message to that effect to the colonel of the Ammunition Park at Ohain. The latter

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officer at once sends up wagons and carts with a fresh supply. The 2nd and 3rd D.A.C.'s draw their ammunition from the Ammunition Park in a similar manner.

The Ammunition Park is divided into three "sections," which are constantly moving between the Advanced Depôt, near Brussels, and Ohain, bringing up shells and cartridges in much the same way as the Supply Park of

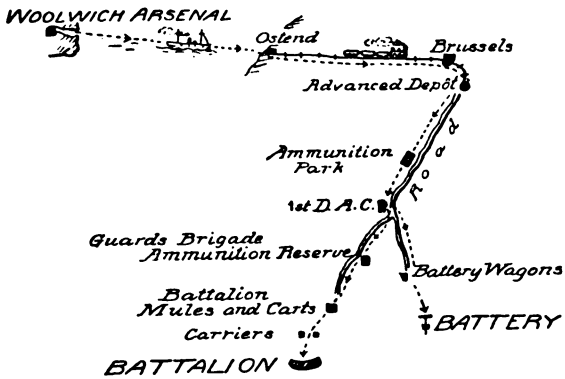

FIG. 41.—AMMUNITION SUPPLY.

This figure shows at a glance how shells and cartridges travel by sea from the Royal Arsenal, Woolwich—where they are made—to Ostend, the "base" of the British army in Belgium. Thence they are carried by rail to the "Advanced Depôt;" then, through the Ammunition Park, Divisional Ammunition Column (D.A.C.), Brigade Ammunition Reserve, mules, carts, and carriers, to the battalion in action.

the Army Service Corps brings up food, as described in Chapter XIV.

The way in which a battery of artillery is supplied with ammunition has already been explained on page 42. When the battery wagons are empty, they are either refilled or replaced by others from the D.A.C. of the division to which the battery belongs.

Fig. 41 gives you a general idea of the system of ammu-

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nition supply which I have just described. It shows you how shells and cartridges travel from the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich, where they are manufactured, to the field of battle at Trou-du-Bois.

The Care of the Wounded.

Fig. 42 shows you how the wounded men of the Guards Brigade are looked after during the fight at Trou-du-Bois on July 17th.

Let us take the case of Private Smith of the Coldstreams, who is severely wounded near the Angel Inn, and see what happens to him between the time he is hit and the moment at which he arrives at the Royal Herbert Hospital at Woolwich, or Netley Hospital near Southampton.

Private Smith is attended to by the medical officer of his battalion as soon as possible. He is then picked up by one of the stretchers shown in the figure. Eight of these stretchers belong to the Coldstreams (one per company), and are under the command of the medical officer. Each is borne by two men, who are trained in the care of the wounded in peace time. The battalion stretchers are assisted by those of the 3rd Bearer Company, which belongs to the Guards Brigade. This company has altogether sixteen stretchers, and, for the sake of convenience, I have shown four of them with each of the three battalions in the figure. The remaining four are with the Grenadiers, who, you will remember, are in reserve at North Bruyère.

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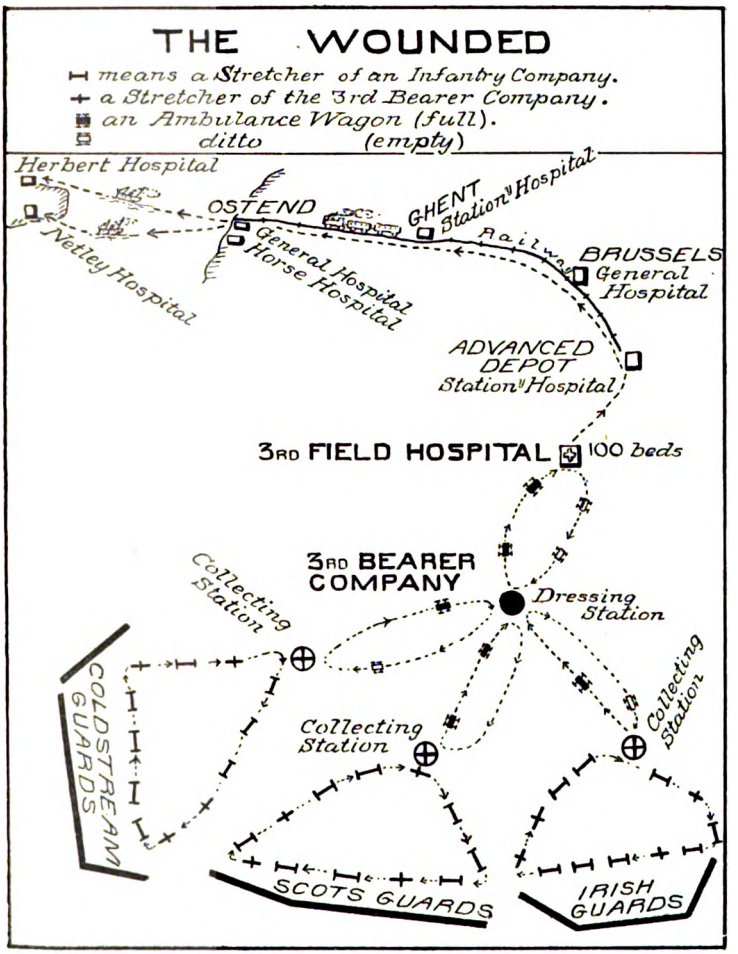

FIG. 42.—THE WOUNDED.

This figure shows at a glance how the wounded men of the Guards Brigade, which is fighting at Trou-du-Bois, are conveyed to the military hospitals in England.

In the figure, the stretchers are represented as travelling along the rear of the Coldstreams, where they pick up the

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wounded, then to the Collecting Station, and then back (empty) to the battalion.

Private Smith is taken in his stretcher to the Collecting Station, where, as its name implies, all the wounded men are collected. (The exact position of the Coldstreams' Collecting Station is shown on *Map 9.*) Here a sergeant of the Bearer Company has a look at his bandages to see that they are all right; gives him a little brandy, as he is faint from loss of blood; and then puts him into one of the ten ambulances (four-horsed wagons) of the Bearer Company. As soon as this ambulance is full, it goes off to the Dressing Station, where it discharges its cargo, and returns to the Collecting Station.

The Bearer Company consists of 3 officers and 58 men of the Royal Army Medical Corps (the R.A.M.C.). Its wagons, 52 horses, and 36 drivers all belong to the Army Service Corps.

The senior officer at the Dressing Station (a major) quickly but carefully dresses Private Smith's wound. He then hurries off to amputate the leg of an unfortunate Scots Guardsman, who has been brought to the Dressing Station from Trou-du-Bois in the same way as Smith has been conveyed there from the Angel.

Private Smith is then transported in one of the Bearer Company's ambulances to the 3rd Field Hospital at Ohain. This consists of 5 officers and 35 men of the R.A.M.C., 4 wagons carrying 100 beds, 4 carts with medicine and food, a water-cart, and about 20 A.S.C. horses and drivers.

Private Smith remains in the Field Hospital for forty-

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eight hours. If there is any chance of his recovery in a few days, he will be kept in the hospital, and then sent to rejoin his battalion. But on the second day the medical officer sees that it is useless to keep him there any longer, as his wound is so bad that it is unlikely that he will be able to fight for several months. So Private Smith, and his rifle and accoutrements, are placed on a bed of straw in a wagon belonging to the Belgian troops who are guarding the British line of communications between Ostend and the Advanced Depôt at Watermael. When he reaches the latter place, the doctor at the Stationary Hospital looks at him, decides that he is fit enough to continue his journey, and then puts him in the hospital train.

The hospital train is sufficiently large to carry 132 wounded men, all lying down, who are attended by the Hospital Train Staff of 3 officers and 26 men of the R.A.M.C. It conveys him along the railway through Brussels and Ghent to Ostend, where a General Hospital has been established in a large building. This hospital contains 520 beds, and has a staff of 21 officers, 8 sisters, and 145 men of the R.A.M.C.

At Ostend—where you will notice that there is a hospital for sick and wounded horses—Private Smith is placed in a hospital ship. He is well looked after on board by 6 officers and 40 men of the R.A.M.C. As soon as the 200 beds in the ship are full, she steams away to England, where Private Smith is put in one of the hospitals shown in the figure.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

THE NIGHT OF THE 17TH-18TH JULY.

(This chapter describes the council of war held by the Germans after their failure to capture Trou-du-Bois. It also shows what the rival armies do during the night. The best map to refer to is *No. 8.*)

DURING the 17th the German telegraph sections are very busy. Each section carries several miles of wire in carts. By using this, as well as by repairing the Belgian lines which were destroyed by the British cavalry when they retreated from Malplaquez, the Germans succeed by four o'clock in the afternoon in putting Prince Lebenfeld in telegraphic communication with each of his four army corps commanders.

What a help this is to the commander-in-chief you will understand when you realize the great extent of country over which the German army is fighting. From Wavre on its right to Witterzee on its left, the distance is over eighteen miles; beyond this, again, the cavalry is extended for a considerable distance. Consequently, thanks to his telegraphists, Prince Lebenfeld is able to follow the events of the day very closely; and when the fighting is over, he summons his chief generals to meet him at Quatre Bras, where he has established his headquarters. It is eleven

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o'clock by the time the last arrives—Von Otendorf, who has been out beyond Ophain with his cavalry, and has had to make a twelve-mile gallop to obey his commander-in-chief's order.

As the long, lean-flanked cavalryman—dusty, but looking little fatigued after his twenty hours in the saddle, in spite of his iron-gray hair and fifty years—enters the room where the other generals are assembled, they all rise and salute. Von Otendorf halts, clicks his spurs together, and returns their salute. This formality over, there are friendly greetings and handshakings, which are presently interrupted by the entrance of the commander-in-chief. There are more salutes, chairs are pulled up to a long table running down the centre of the room, and the events of the day are discussed.

Finally, after much talking and poring over maps, Prince Lebenfeld addresses his generals.

"I have received information to-day which makes it certain that a large British force, possibly two army corps, will land at Ostend in four days' time."

The Prince's remark causes a stir among his generals —this is serious news indeed. The commander-in-chief proceeds:—

"From this you will perceive that it is absolutely necessary for us to crush the enemy we have before us in the next four days. In fact, the sooner that we can do this, the better shall we be prepared for dealing with the new arrivals.

"We have before us about 40,000 British and 40,000

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Belgians. If we attack the Belgians, we shall probably defeat them. It may, however, take us two days to do this, as they are strongly intrenched behind an unfordable river. We shall be wasting valuable time; and even if we eventually succeed, we shall still have the British to fight. The latter are not likely to be very much disconcerted by the defeat of their allies; while, on the other hand, if we attack and defeat the British, the Belgians will be utterly demoralized, and will become easy victims.

"Under these circumstances, there can be no doubt that the best thing we can do is to make a powerful attempt to crush the British.

"To-morrow, therefore, I propose to push home very strongly the attacks against the British which we began to-day. The 1st Army Corps will make a feint attack on the Belgians, so as to give them the impression that they are being threatened, and thus prevent them from sending reinforcements to the British. The 2nd Army Corps will attack Ways Ridge. The 3rd Army Corps will attack Trou-du-Bois, after a heavy and prolonged bombardment. The 4th Army Corps will again remain in reserve two miles south of Quatre Bras.

"General Von Otendorf's cavalry will continue to drive back the British mounted troops, and will reconnoitre the country towards Brussels."

Prince Lebenfeld then issues written orders to each of his generals, and they return to their respective army corps. The orders are then further distributed among brigades and divisions, so that, by daybreak on the 18th,

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every company commander and squadron leader in the German army knows the intentions of the commander-in-chief.

What the rival Armies do during the Night.

You have already read how, when darkness put a stop to the fight, the 3rd Army Corps intrenched itself in the position which it won during the day. In a similar way, the other army corps intrench themselves along the Dyle. The different battalions fortify the villages and woods in which they find themselves at the end of the day's battle.

The German engineers are busy during the night repairing the bridges over the Dyle and Thyle, which were destroyed by the British cavalry on their retreat from Malplaquez. The railway corps are also very hard at work endeavouring to make good the damage done to the railways leading from Namur to Nivelles, Ottignies, and Etienne. This is a very important piece of work, as the Germans want the lines for bringing up the enormous amount of food and stores required daily by their 200,000 men. The repairs are very far from completion by daylight, however; for at least twenty bridges or viaducts have been wrecked by the British cavalry pioneers and the sappers of the field troop.

The British are by no means idle during the night. The Buffs are sent from the 3rd Division to reinforce the 1st on the right of the line. When the pom-poms retire from Ways Ridge, two of the guns are sent to Napoleon's Wood, where they are sheltered behind trunks of felled trees and banks of earth covered with leafy branches.

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Obstacles are made along the front of the wood by the Royal West Kent Regiment and the 23rd Company, R.E.

The lesson taught by the enemy's terrific artillery bombardment is not lost by the British. The men willingly sacrifice a few hours of sleep in order to improve the shelters started during the day. As a rule, these are just deep trenches roofed over with floor boards torn from the ruined houses of the village, and then covered with a foot of earth. They are dug close to the trenches from which the men fire, and are joined to them by passages cut through the earth at intervals. Although the covering is not sufficient to keep out a shell, yet it affords ample protection against shrapnel bullets and splinters.

The gunners prepare alternative emplacements in concealed places, to which they can move their guns and open fire afresh should the enemy discover their positions. Several strong parties are also sent out by the Grenadiers to dig shelter trenches on the brow of the hill three or four hundred yards in front of the Guards' trenches. They will not be occupied, but are merely to catch the enemy's eye. They are, in fact, "dummy shelter trenches," like that made by Lieutenant Cairnes on Ways Ridge this morning. A few sticks with a dead man's cap here and there complete a deception which, half a mile away, it is almost impossible to detect.

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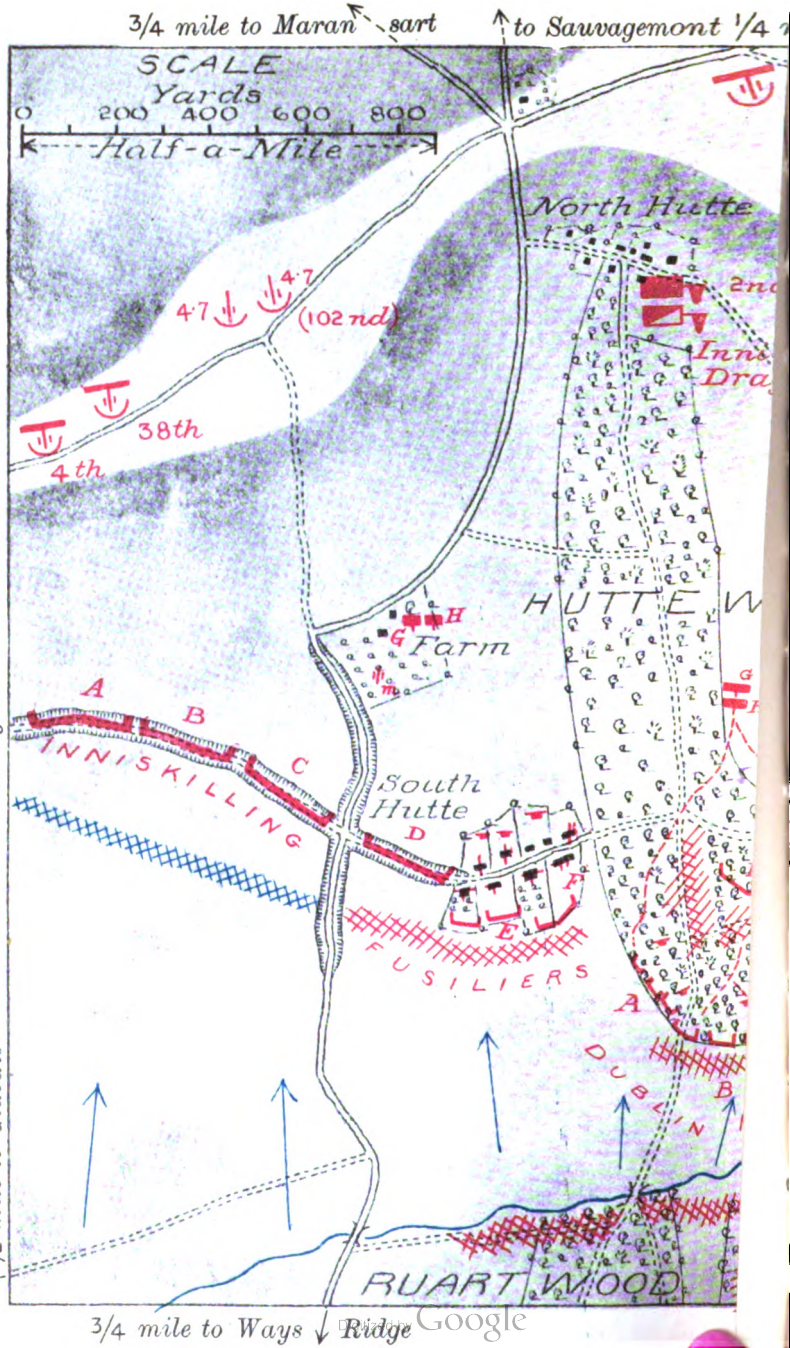

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CHAPTER XXIV.

THE IRISH BRIGADE AT WORK.

(A letter from Lieutenant Daniel Brady of B Company, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, to his brother at Wellington College, in which he describes how the Irish Brigade fortified Hutte Wood, and how they fought desperately with the Germans of the 2nd Army Corps on the 18th of July.

Map 12 shows the share taken in the great battle of July 18th by the Irishmen, and *Map 10* shows exactly how they fortified Hutte Wood.)

ROYAL DUBLIN FUSILIERS,
BRITISH FIELD FORCE, BELGIUM.
July 19, 19—.

MY DEAR TIM,—You will be playing Charterhouse to-day. Good luck to you and the old school. I hope you will beat them.

Bedad, old man, you'll have to try to get into Sandhurst next exam. Fighting is hard work, but it is splendid for all that, provided that you don't get hit. But you have to take your chance of that. You ought to have no difficulty in getting a commission in the "Dear, Dirty Dublins," for there will be plenty of vacancies in the regiment before this war is over, bad luck to it! There's many a good fellow gone already.

Since I last wrote to you from Brussels, we have had some precious hard work.

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After a fifteen-mile march in broiling heat on the 16th, we arrived at a place called Hutte Farm, surrounded by big woods. After an hour's rest we paraded at 4.30, marched through a wood also called Hutte, and reaching its southern edge we started fortifying it.

First, I must tell you that our brigade is occupying a very important part of the British line, as you will understand when I explain our position to you.

The wood which we and the Irish Rifles are holding lies on a gentle slope of a valley which runs from west to east. (*See Map 12.*) About two hundred and fifty yards in front of us is a little brook called the Cal, running in a steep-sided ravine about three or four feet deep. Just beyond this brook is a big forest called Sclage Wood, which stretches away to the south, and climbs up the side of Ways Ridge, the top of which is about one and a quarter miles away.

Beyond this ridge is the river Dyle, across which we expected the Germans to advance. Our cavalry were placed on the ridge; should they withdraw, the enemy would be free to climb up the sides, enter Sclage Wood, and advance to within three or four hundred yards of us without our seeing them. As this would give them a tremendous advantage, we expected that they would send a very large force into Sclage Wood to try to turn us out. They would then have only the Cal and a strip of ground less than four hundred yards broad to cross before they were on us, so we had to do our utmost to stop them in that short distance.

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We ought really to have cut down Sclage Wood; but even with all the sappers who were helping us, we should not have had nearly enough time to do this. I am making you a sketch of what we actually did.* We cut down a broad belt of trees along the edge of our wood, cutting the trunks rather more than half-way

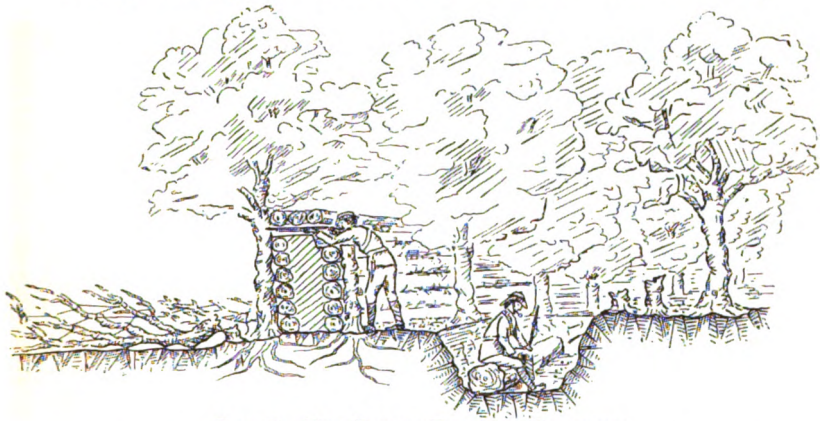

FIG. 43.—THE DUBLIN FUSILIERS' STOCKADE.

This sketch shows how the Dublins fortified the edge of Hutte Wood. The stockade and trench have been cut through vertically in the picture to show their construction. The man is firing over a stockade made by placing the trunks of trees horizontally between standing trees, and by piling earth in between the two walls thus formed. A row of tree trunks, three deep, supported at intervals by pieces of wood, protects the rifleman's head. The men firing stand two or three yards apart—only one is shown in the sketch; while other men—the "supports"—sit in the trench four or five yards apart, ready to replace any of the firers who are hit.

through about two feet above the ground. Then we pulled the trees over with ropes so that they fell towards the enemy. We then stripped off some of the leaves and small branches, so that we could see through them, and sharpened the ends of the bigger branches. After that we ran stout wire along the line of felled trees, entangling

* From here follow the description on *Map 10.*

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it among the branches, and making a very formidable obstacle to get across. We left a few narrow openings for our patrols to get through at night.*

Behind this obstacle—which is called a "tree entanglement"—we made a sort of stockade to shelter ourselves from the enemy's bullets. We cut a lot of branches and small trees, and laid them horizontally between the trunks of some big trees which we left standing. Then we piled earth in between, with the result that we got a splendid bullet-proof wall.

You would have thought that the trees alone would have kept out the bullets; but they won't, unless you pile up a tremendous lot of them. A bullet can go through four feet of solid wood, whereas about two and a half feet of earth stops it. It sounds rather curious that this should be so, but Joiner—he was at Wellington, and is now captain of the field company of our division—told me something still more peculiar. They had some experiments—in Sweden, I think it was—and found that a bullet would not go through a bank of snow two feet thick! The snow packed about the head of the bullet and stopped it. The bank, by the way, was not even rammed or beaten down; it was merely thrown up loosely with shovels.

Inside our wood we cut paths through the trees, so that three of our companies, who were posted as a reserve outside the rear edge of the wood, could march quickly to

* The way in which the Dublins fortified the edge of the wood is shown in *Fig. 43*.

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the assistance of any part of our line. Wherever one path crossed another, we put a sign-post to show where it led to—generally a board nailed to a tree with a finger painted on it, and the words, "To A Company, R.D.F.," "To Hutte Farm," or "To Hutte Village," and so on.

There was a tremendous amount of work to be done; and it was lucky we had a lot of sappers to help us, or we should have been unable to have done it. Joiner told me that not only was his half-company—the 26th—at work, but that General French had also sent the 17th Field Company from the 3rd Division, and half the 5th Company from the Corps Troops, to help the Irish Brigade.* Two battalions of the 6th Brigade—we call them the "Ladysmith Brigade," as they were all in Ladysmith during the siege—were also sent from the reserve to assist. Altogether we had about 6,000 infantrymen and 500 sappers at work. There was no lack of tools, as each battalion has a tool-cart besides the shovels the men carry; and the sapper companies, of course, carry a lot of axes, saws, and spades. The Field Park of the Royal Engineers also sent up a wagon full of shovels, pickaxes, saws, and wire, so that we had plenty of stuff to work with.

On the night of the 16th, the Manchesters were on outpost duty on Ways Ridge, so we had a good rest. During the whole of the 17th there was a terrific noise of firing just in front of us, as the enemy were attacking

* See the "Chart of the 1st Army Corps" on pp. 66, 67.

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our mounted troops who were holding Ways Ridge.* Occasionally a shell or a bullet came somewhere near us; but only one man was hit in our regiment, and we were able to continue our work all day. We were, however, always ready to man our trenches, in case the cavalry should have to retire.

During the day the sappers cut down a lot of trees along the edge of Sclage Wood just opposite us, and entangled them with wire, to prevent the enemy from getting out easily. There is a road running through that wood to the top of Ways Ridge. By cutting down some trees on each side of it, the sappers enabled us to see up this road; so we placed our machine gun where it could fire along it.

At midday we knocked off work for a couple of hours, and had a rattling good dinner. You don't know how much you enjoy a good stew of meat and vegetables all lumped together, and boiled in a pot over a wood fire, until you have earned it by working from four o'clock in the morning!

After dinner the colonel held a "pow-wow" with all the officers. He explained to us the exact positions of the different regiments in the brigade, and made us follow the explanation on the maps we all carry. We were told, however, not to mark the positions on the map, in case any of us might be captured.

He told us that the firing line of our brigade consisted

* This was the attack on the "false position" described from Lieutenant Cairnes's point of view in Chapter XIX.

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of all four battalions. The Inniskilling Fusiliers were on our right, defending a hollow road and some houses and hedges in the small village of South Hutte. Then came ourselves and the Irish Rifles in Hutte Wood, and then the Connaught Rangers in Pallandi Wood, on the left of our line. (*Map 10.*)

Each battalion was keeping two or three of its companies in reserve. The remainder were manning the trenches and stockades, half the men as a firing line, and the other half sitting behind as supports, ready to replace any man who was hit, or to join in with their rifles in case of a very determined attack by the enemy.

Our local reserve was about a mile behind us, near North Hutte. At present, the colonel said, it was composed of the 1st Battalion of the King's Royal Rifles; but these would be relieved by the Inniskilling Dragoons and the 2nd Battalion of Mounted Infantry when they retired from the "false position" in front of us.

Having told us that we would have to provide our own outposts, and would have to sleep in our trenches during the coming night (last night we spent in the open fields behind the wood), the colonel dismissed us.

A little later he walked around our trenches and inspected them. When he reached our company, he asked one of my men—

"Supposing you hear the enemy advancing from the wood opposite after it is dark, Private O'Connor, what would you do?"

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O'Connor stepped forward with a grin, and laid his rifle on the top of the stockade, pointing towards the wood.

"I should lay me rifle there, sir, put one hand on top to steady it, and wait for the order to fire. The top of this parapet is so constructed that the bullet from my rifle will enter the belly of any man coming out of yonder wood—whether he was there or not," added O'Connor as an afterthought.

The afternoon of the 17th was rather a period of suspense. The firing in front grew heavier and heavier, and we could see clouds of smoke from the bursting shells blowing along the top of Ways Ridge. After two o'clock, ambulance wagons full of wounded men were constantly passing along the roads leading from the ridge to the hills behind us. Occasionally an artillery wagon or cavalry cart tore past at full gallop, carrying up ammunition to the mounted troops, whom we expected every minute to retire, as they were not ordered to hold on to their position very long. We learned to-day, however, that the Germans were not making their real attack against Ways Ridge on the 17th, but against the Guards, four miles away on the right of our line.

At eight o'clock I was ordered to go on outpost duty with my half-company. My captain told me when he gave me this order that, although each company was placing two sentries in its trench, it had also been considered advisable to place a line of sentries along the Cal, about three hundred yards in front of us. My special duty was to watch the road leading from our trenches

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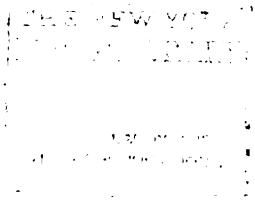

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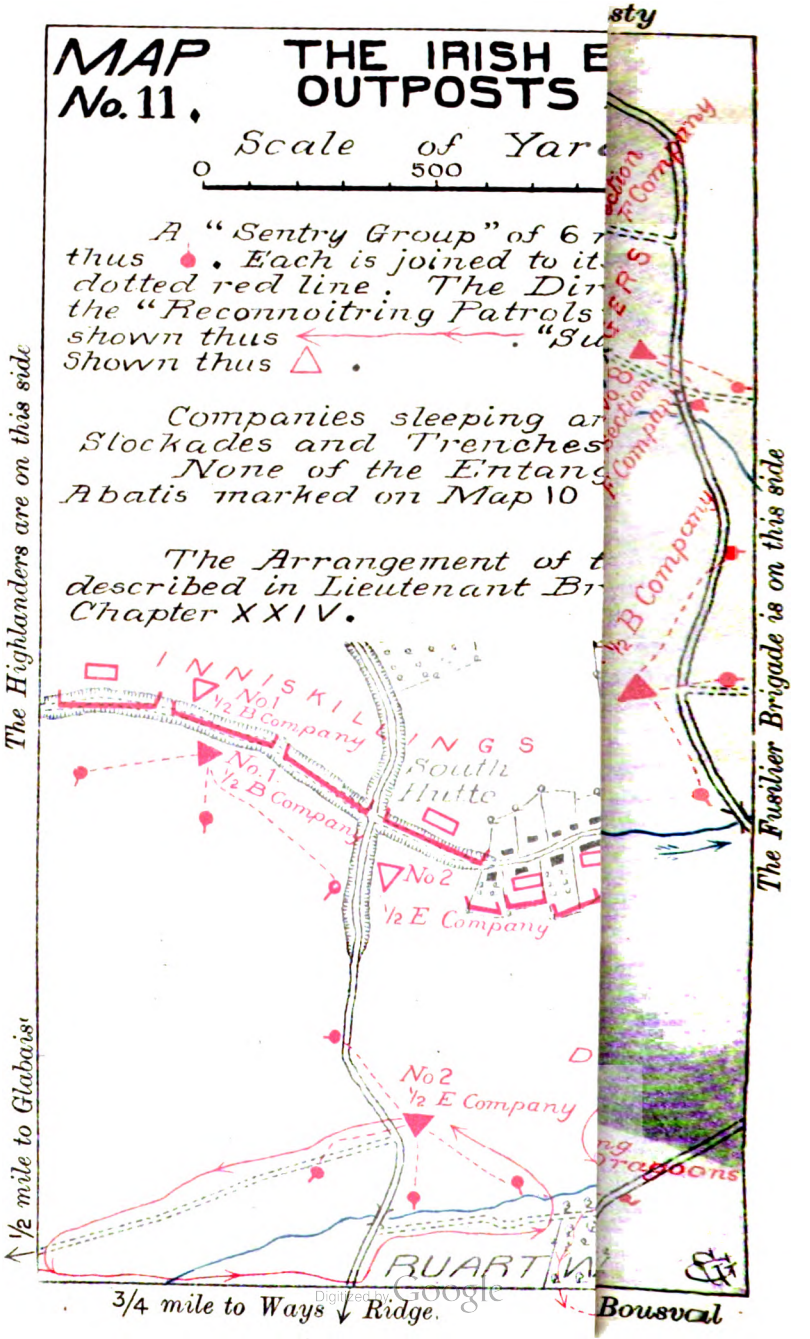

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into Ruart Wood. I was to form No. 3 Piquet. (*See Map 11.*)

I paraded my men at 8.15, and marched them to B Company trench at the edge of the wood. Here I ordered a sergeant and twenty-three men to fall out.

"Sergeant Jones," I said to the former, "your party will remain here to act as 'No. 3 Support.' You will post one sentry, whom you will relieve every two hours. You yourself must remain awake, but the other men may lie down and sleep with their rifles by their sides."

I then took the rest of my half-company about half way to the brook, halted them on the road, and told them they were "No 3 Piquet" of the Irish Brigade.

I had a sergeant, two corporals, and twenty-eight men in this piquet, and I gave them the following duties to perform.

I posted six men as a "sentry group" at the little wooden bridge over the river, and gave them these orders:—

"Two of you will act as sentries, one always remaining on the bridge, and the other walking about near him. The other four men may lie down on this side of the bridge, close to it: two of them will relieve the sentries every two hours.

"You will keep a vigilant lookout, and let no one pass who does not know the countersign, 'Plevna.' You will shoot any one who refuses to halt on being challenged."

Returning to the piquet, I formed the men into four parties.

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One party of three men was to post a sentry over the piquet, relieving him every two hours.

One party of three men and a lance-corporal was to form a "visiting patrol." Accompanied by one man, the corporal was to visit the sentries and the support constantly, to see that the men were on the alert. To begin with, I sent this patrol off to find out where the sentries of the piquets on each side of us were posted, so that my own sentries might know.

One party of nine men, a sergeant, and a corporal was to form "Reconnoitring Patrol, No. 1." For two hours the sergeant and three of the men were to search Ruart Wood as far as the southern edge. The remainder might sleep, but at the end of the two hours, the corporal and three of the men were to relieve the sergeant's party. By this means I had a patrol constantly searching the ground on the other side of the brook the whole night through.

The last party of six men and a corporal I formed into "Reconnoitring Patrol, No. 2." The corporal and two of the men were to move about on this side of the brook, and keep me in touch with the piquets on either side of me.

Shortly after nine o'clock a party of horsemen was stopped by my sentries, who sent back word to me that the officer in command stated that they were mounted infantrymen, but that he could not give the countersign.

Going down to the bridge, I found one of my sentries covering with his rifle a horseman about twenty yards away, on the other side of the brook. Some distance

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behind this horseman was a group of mounted men, just discernible in the dusk.

I crossed the bridge and advanced towards the horseman, when I found he really was one of our mounted infantry officers—in fact, I knew him well.

"Hang it all, Dan!" he called out when he saw me. "This confounded sentry of yours wanted to shoot me—took me for an enemy!"

"Why didn't you give him the countersign, old chap?"

"Didn't know it—been too busy all day to worry about such trifles," he answered with a laugh; and waving to his men, they advanced along the road.

"We have been having a deuce of a time," he said, as I walked back to the piquet by the side of his horse. "Such a shelling as we got in Ways I have never seen before, and never want to see again. You'd have thought that none of us would have got out of the place alive. Taking everything into consideration, we have been very lucky. My company has only lost twenty-one men—six killed and fifteen wounded. Those Germans are splendid fellows! You should have seen them coming over the open—plucky as anything! But they lost very heavily in the last few hundred yards. They piled their men on too thick, and the machine gun simply swept them away by the dozen. By the way, the cavalry are retiring from the ridge soon, so you'll have to look out!"

With a cheery "good night" he rode on; and as his men followed, I noticed that, although he said he had only fifteen wounded, more than half his company had head,

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arm, or leg adorned with bandages. Several pale faces and unsteady seats in the saddle gave evidence of loss of blood; but in spite of their hard day, the men were merry, and exchanged many a jest in Celtic with the Dublins of my piquet as they passed.

"They're the Tipperary boys, sir," said my sergeant as they disappeared in the wood on their way to Sauvagemont—"C Company of the 2nd M.I."

In case you don't understand this, Tim, I may tell you that every regiment of infantry sends a certain number of men every year to the big camps at home to be trained as mounted infantrymen. When war comes, these men are formed into a company, leave the regiment temporarily, and join a mounted infantry battalion. The company which had just passed us came from the 18th Royal Irish Regiment, which is recruited in Tipperary and thereabouts. You often hear at home that most of the men in Irish regiments are not Irishmen, but don't you believe it. More than ninety per cent. of the Dublins are the "rale bhoys," and no mistake about it!

My "No. 1 Patrol" brought me in word at half-past nine that there were a dozen Scots Greys on vedette duty on the ridge in front, but that the rest of the cavalry had gone. I sent a message to the Greys' sergeant in charge of the party telling him where we were, and asking him to let me know if the enemy advanced.*

It was not half bad doing outpost duty until it began to

* This was the patrol left by Lieutenant Cairnes, as narrated in Chapter XIX.

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rain. A storm had been blowing up all day, and about midnight the rain came down in torrents. Pitch dark, too, with an occasional flash of lightning, which showed up the fields and trees, all glistening in the wet, and the forms of my two sentries by the bridge. The brook was soon swollen until it became quite a respectable river, and the roads simply ran with water. It was jolly chilly, too; and what with cold and damp, the men off duty did not get much sleep. They tramped about, trying to get warm, or sat close together, huddled up in their greatcoats: regular horse-blankets they look in the daytime—do you remember how we laughed when we first saw one on an Imperial Yeoman? —but they are warm and comfortable for active service.

Towards three o'clock the storm ceased suddenly, and the sky began to lighten. Shortly afterwards we heard several shots from the ridge, and a little later a squadron of the Inniskillings came out of Ruart Wood and clattered along the road. "Coming to relieve you," called out the major at their head, with a wave of his hand as he trotted past. They dashed across the bridge, and disappeared in the wood behind.

Just before sunrise there was a sound of distant firing, and shells began to burst over Ways Ridge. Several sailed over the crest and burst in Sclage and Ruart Woods. Howitzer shells, these last were; and what with their smoke, and the steam rising from the soaking ground, we could scarcely see half a mile in front of us.*

* The bombardment which has just commenced is that ordered by Prince Lebenfeld, to prepare the way for the attack of the 2nd German Army Corps on Ways Ridge.

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Just as the first rays of the sun were shooting up the valley, a cyclist brought me a message :—

"*HUTTE FARM,*
18th July, 4 a.m.

To O.C. No. 3 Piquet. The cavalry have formed an outpost line on WAYS RIDGE. The infantry outposts will retire at 4.30 a.m.

(*Signed*) *W. Driscoll, Major,*
Commanding the Irish Brigade Outposts."

I sent off a receipt, and at 4.30 drew in my sentries and retired to Hutte Wood. Here I found the rest of our battalion cooking breakfast, a little drier than we were on account of the shelter of the trees.

An hour later a rapid and continuous rifle fire broke out on the ridge in front. Just then our colonel and adjutant rode up along a path through the wood, and stopped near our trench.

"Wonder how they are getting on up there," said the colonel.

"I don't suppose the Germans will be taken in as they were yesterday," remarked the adjutant, referring to the way in which our cavalry bluffed the enemy on the 17th, by making him imagine that Ways Ridge was held by a strong force.

"No, I fancy they mean business to-day," replied the colonel. "Hallo, Dan!" he added, catching sight of me—they all call me Dan in the regiment; I believe the men do too!—"you look cold!"

"I am, sir," I replied, for I was wet to the skin.

"Well, look here; I am just going to have my breakfast

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so take my pony and gallop up to the ridge—that will warm you. Don't get shot, and bring me back word of what is going on."

The dear old boy slipped off the polo pony he was riding, and in another minute I was slashing along as fast as the little beggar could gallop. He was cold, and wanted to warm himself too.

Behind the ridge I found several groups of horses, tethered together and grazing, unconcerned at the shells which occasionally burst in close proximity to them. Knowing the pony was carefully trained and would stay where he was, I dismounted and ascended the hill. On the top I got wetter than ever, if possible, by crawling on hands and knees through some long grass. At last I reached a place far enough forward to see into the valley of the Dyle. (*Map 12.*)

It was pretty lively where I was now; more than one shell burst quite close to me. But down in the valley everything was quiet and peaceful. Half a mile away I could just see the roofs of the houses in Ways, rising above the mist which the sun was drawing out of the damp earth. The hills across the valley were also outlined in a steamy haze; and searching this carefully with my field-glasses, I caught sight of frequent short, sharp flashes of flame. The enemy's artillery were there evidently, but what on earth were they shelling the ridge for?

"Ah!" The sight drew an involuntary exclamation from my lips. A blue, spiked helmet bobbed up in the mist from behind a bank on the slope below me, barely four

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hundred yards away. Then another and another. Suddenly the mist lifted for a moment—why, I do not know; a slant of wind, perhaps—then settled down again. But that glimpse was enough for me; it showed the whole valley simply swarming with blue-coated figures—thousands of them!

I turned, and to say I ran like a hare would be to exaggerate—in my favour, for I am sure no hare that was ever born could have caught me. As I ran, I heard the cavalry trumpets sounding like mad all along the ridge. First one and then another took up the "retire;" and when I threw myself breathless on my pony, the whole misty hillside was covered with running men.

I drew rein for a moment behind a corner of Ruart Wood, and watched the group of cavalry retire. Their horses were in the open country to the west. The dragoons—from their numbers they must have been a troop—mounted hastily. Now they will be off, I thought. But no; they still stayed, evidently waiting for some one. Ah! here he comes. A figure ran swiftly down the hillside, flung himself on a horse, and waved his arm. The whole troop turned right about and dashed off at a gallop, the men opening out until there were several yards between them. They disappeared in the mist of the low ground.

The shells suddenly stopped falling, and I knew that it was time for me, too, to be off. But some strange fascination seized me, so I stayed to see the enemy arrive.

I had not long to wait. Just as the mist suddenly

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cleared away from the ridge top, and left it standing out clear and bold against the morning sky, a muffled "Hurra! hurra!" mixed with the clear notes of many bugles, filled the air. The sun glittered for a moment on serried lines of flashing bayonets and helmet spikes; then I gave my pony his head, and went through the wood like a rocket. I wasn't afraid, Tim, but I didn't want to stay any longer.

The pony, disdaining the bridge, cleared the brook in his stride; a good jump for the little beggar—twelve feet from bank to bank. As I galloped over the short grass towards our trenches, a brief feeling of the most awful dread suddenly seized me. Not a man was to be seen!

For a moment my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth —pure funk, I tell you, for I thought the regiment had marched off to its bivouac behind the wood. And the enemy just on us, too! I half pulled my revolver out of its case to give the alarm, and then pushed it back again with a sudden revulsion of feeling; for, of course, the men were there, hidden behind the stockade.

Silly, was it not? But it shows how nicely we were concealed from the view of an enemy approaching our intrenchments.

"You young beggar!" said my captain, as I turned through the zigzag entrance we had made in B Company's stockade to shield the road within the wood from the enemy's fire. "You gave me a beastly fright by staying so long. Be off with you, and tell the colonel what you have seen. He is over there with A Company."

I made my report to the colonel, and then ran back to

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my company. My captain came along presently, and said, "Our orders are to hold our fire until the enemy tries to get over that entanglement on the other side of the brook. Till then, not a shot. You have the range?"

"Yes, sir; three hundred yards."

A man near me chuckled, and turned his head towards a comrade.

"Even you couldn't miss at that, eh, Mike?"

There was a subdued laugh from the other men which drowned Mike's growl. Poor Mike is a "third-class shot"!

The artillery away to the right of our position had by this time opened fire, and some guns on the hill behind Hutte Wood were sending shells flying over our heads. Looking to the right, past the corner of Ruart Wood, we got a capital view of Ways Ridge from our intrenchments—at least that part of it which extends from the place where the road from Sauvagemont to Ways crosses it to where the ridge gradually rises and joins Botte Hill, the position of the Highland Brigade. (*See Map 12.*) The Highlanders did not appear to be firing, for there was very little sound of rifles; the enemy was probably not within easy range.

But the field artillery and the 4·7's were making up for the silence of the infantry. Shells were bursting along the ridge, and had already driven the enemy to cover; for though I searched the hillside with my glasses, not a man was to be seen. The 4·7's, however, were higher than we were, and from their position near Botte Redoubt could see right along the ridge, and sweep it with their fire for three or four miles.

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I think it was nearly seven o'clock before the enemy showed himself in Sclage Wood. Then several men appeared, advancing cautiously through the trees. They were probably the enemy's scouts, feeling their way. One chap stopped just opposite me when he reached the line of entanglement along the brook. He dodged behind the nearest tree when he saw it, evidently suspecting that he was getting pretty close to us.

The next half-hour was rather trying. The men sat comfortably in the trenches behind the stockades, while we officers kept a lookout through the loopholes. The Germans were moving about in the wood opposite, keeping well under cover of tree trunks. Presently they opened fire on us when they discovered the stockade; but not a rifle replied from our side. Our field artillery had stopped, and the only firing in our immediate locality came from some howitzers just behind our wood, where the 61st Battery was stationed. The shells sailed over our heads, and fell among the trees across the brook.

Suddenly there was a rapid increase in the enemy's rifle fire, and a few minutes later large masses of Germans began to show themselves through the trees. Instantly the word "Ready" was passed along the line, and our men sprang to their loopholes as a swarm of figures poured out of the wood. As they reached the entanglement of felled trees and wire, the order was given to begin firing.

I can hardly describe the effect of our first volley. The distance, remember, was only three hundred yards. It seemed to me as if the first rank of Germans went down

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to a man. The survivors wavered; but a fresh rush of men from behind carried them forward on to the entanglement. As they endeavoured to struggle through the wire-entangled branches, we poured volley after volley into them, keeping our men well in hand, and stopping any attempts to fire indiscriminately. It was "Ready! Present! Bang!" "Ready! Present! Bang!" as if we were doing the "firing exercise" on the barrack parade-ground; and each time a sheet of bullets tore great gaps in the enemy's ranks. Our battalion machine gun was near us, and kept up a continual clatter as it was turned along the German line.

The slaughter was awful. In less than two minutes the enemy were bolting back through the trees. We gave the order "Independent firing," and chased them with our bullets until they disappeared far into the wood. Then the bugles sounded the "Cease fire," and once more all was quiet, except for the roar of the howitzers behind us.

It was a horrid sight, the pile of dead and wounded men lying along the entanglement by the brook. Though they were so near us, we could do nothing to help them; but presently several persons emerged boldly from Sclage Wood, and began to attend to the wounded men.

Shortly afterwards a howitzer shell fell in our wood a short distance behind the trenches, and exploded with great violence. It was soon followed by another, and we came in for a severe bombardment. Where it came from, goodness only knows, but come it did with a vengeance. Shrapnel shells burst in the air overhead, and sent showers

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of bullets pattering down on the trees, while the high explosives tore and shattered the branches.*

We ordered the men to get close up against the stockade and sit on the ground. In this way they were quite safe from the enemy's shrapnel bullets. After a while, however, the Germans got the range of the stockade very accurately. Some of their officers must have been watching (from concealed positions in Sclage Wood) where their shells fell, and directing the aim of their unseen batteries by messengers, for as time went on their fire became perfectly deadly. The shrapnel shells were all right—we did not mind them; but when the high-explosive shells from their howitzers began just popping over the stockade, we lost men rapidly. The smell from these high explosives was awful; it made you feel sick and faint. One of them fell on the stockade at the left end of my company and blew a great gap in it, ten or twelve feet wide, killing nine men. I saw the bodies of these poor chaps later in the day. Some of them had not even been hit, but had been killed merely by the terrific force of the explosion. After the fight was over, it was very easy to tell who were the victims of the howitzers' shells—their skins were stained a bright yellow colour, from the fumes of the acid in the explosive.

The fire along the stockade grew so hot at last that we were obliged to retire our men about one hundred yards

* The shells Lieutenant Brady mentions here came from the German 5th and 6th Artillery Regiments, which, as you will see from *Map 12*, were stationed on Ways Ridge. These two regiments (fifty-four field-guns and eighteen howitzers) moved there during the attack which the Irishmen have just repulsed.

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back into the wood, where they took refuge in the splinter-proofs they had made during the previous day—rough trenches roofed over with felled trees and earth. I stayed at the stockade with my captain and a dozen men, to keep a lookout for any further attack by the enemy. We could not see any of them; but they were pretty thick in the wood opposite for all that, as I soon found out by raising my hat on a stick just above the stockade. A score of bullets whizzed past it at once.

Meanwhile an incessant noise of firing came from our right, where the Inniskilling Fusiliers were intrenched. Farther on, too, there was a lot of firing. In fact, the whole of our line to the right seemed to be engaged.

(This noise of firing mentioned by Lieutenant Brady came from the German 7th Brigade, which, supported by the 7th and 8th Artillery Regiments, was attacking the Inniskilling Fusiliers in the sunken road west of Hutte Wood, and the half-battalion of Argyle and Sutherland in Glabais. (*See Map 12.*)

As the young subaltern was too busy to watch the course of the fight in those parts, and therefore did not describe it in his letter, I will narrate to you very briefly what occurred.

The enemy was unsuccessful against the Inniskillings, as the ground over which he had to advance was swept by the fire of several British batteries and the Seaforth Highlanders on Flamandes Hill. The Germans carried Glabais, however, at eleven o'clock, driving the A. and S. out of the village after some very severe fighting. The Highlanders retired behind the rest of their brigade, having inflicted heavy losses on their assailants. The latter then abandoned their attack on the Inniskillings, leaving one battalion of the XIIIth Regiment to engage their attention, and the whole of the 7th Brigade assembled in the gardens and orchards around Glabais, spending the rest of the day in futile attempts to carry the Highland Brigade's position. The Germans were later reinforced by the XVth Regiment from Genappe; but thanks to their carefully-prepared intrenchments and obstacles, the Highlanders maintained their position with comparative ease.)

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The continual bombardment which we were receiving grew terribly monotonous, and the constant ear-splitting crash of the howitzer shells simply wore our nerves out. The air was thick with smoke, which rolled up the little valley in clouds, at times so heavy that we could scarcely see across the brook. Our little lookout party crouched behind the stockade, taking turns, two or three at a time, to keep an eye on the front of our position. Several large gaps were torn in the stockade, which we were unable to repair; for the moment we tried to fill them up a hot rifle fire broke out from Ruart Wood, and bullets buzzed through the openings. The tree entanglement along the front of the stockade, too, was badly damaged; but it was fairly thick and wide, and so still offered a good obstacle to an enemy's advance. It was lucky, as my captain remarked, that we had had such heavy rain in the night, otherwise the trees in the entanglement might have caught fire—several of them smouldered as it was.

I had just looked at my watch—it was about eleven o'clock—when there was a louder crash than usual from the wood opposite. Jumping to my feet and looking through a loophole, I was just in time to see a column of dirt, branches, and smoke rising from the edge of Ruart Wood.

"By George! they are blowing up the obstacles," exclaimed my captain.

So they were. Some German pioneers (they correspond to our sappers) must have crept through the wood and placed packets of explosives among the felled trees, after-

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wards crawling away, and blowing them up by means of powder fuses—a sort of slow-burning match. They kept this up for the next hour, explosions occurring at intervals. We succeeded in potting several pioneers; but they were plucky fellows, and stuck to their work. I don't suppose that they did very much damage, but, at least, they managed to make some gaps through which their infantry could advance.

Suddenly, about midday, the enemy's shells ceased to fall around the stockade. My captain turned sharply to the sergeant standing next to him.

"Bring up the company, Murphy," he said. "Bugler, sound the 'alarm.'"

Sergeant Murphy dashed off along the path leading to the shelter where our men were lying, and the notes of the bugle rang loud and clear through the trees. At that moment a mass of blue figures appeared at the edge of Ruart and Sclage Woods, and swept forward towards the brook. Those of us who were already at the stockade opened fire on them; but we were far too few in number to check their advance in the slightest. Like a huge wave breaking over a stranded spar on the seashore, they surged over the line of obstacles between the woods and the brook. As they did so there was a sound of rushing feet from behind, and our men came dashing up. In a moment they were at the loopholes, blazing away for all they were worth.

The whole wood now echoed to the continual roar of musketry, as we and the Irish Rifles poured a rapid,

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GERMAN INFANTRY ADVANCING TO THE ATTACK.

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independent fire on the enemy. After the strain of lying for four long hours doing nothing under the German artillery fire, our men were only too anxious to relieve their pent-up energy by blazing away as fast as they could. Too fast some of them, and I had to check several in my half-company who had opened their magazines, and were proceeding to empty them at the enemy. That could not be allowed till the latter reached the last hundred yards—until then, load and fire, load and fire in the ordinary way.

The Germans were badly shaken, and seemed to hang back for a moment. Then another line swept out of the woods, and carried the first forward until they both tumbled into the little hollow in which the brook runs. Here they took shelter for a moment, and then made another dash forward. But our fire was too hot, and we rolled them back into the bed of the stream, from which they presently opened a steady rifle fire on us.

We took the opportunity of this check to get our men in hand, and to stop their indiscriminate firing. I gave the order to fire by volleys only, telling a dozen of my best shots, however, to fire when they liked.

Another wave of Germans surged out of the woods and rolled forward to the brook, into the bed of which they disappeared. This increased their fire; and there we were, just over two hundred yards apart, banging away at each other. We had the advantage, however; for shattered as the stockade was in places, it still gave us good cover, and our loopholes prevented us from being seen, while the

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heads of the Germans showed above the edge of the bank whenever they stood up to fire.

While this rifle duel was going on, two more lines swept forward, losing heavily, as the others had done, in their short journey from the edge of the woods to the brook, a distance of about one hundred yards. The second of these two lines seemed to carry the others forward, for the enemy swarmed over the bank and dashed towards us with fixed bayonets and the stirring, maddening ringing of many bugles.

It was terribly hard work keeping the fire of the men in hand—they wanted to "loose off" as fast as they could. By dint of shouting, and pulling, and shoving them, however, we managed it, and kept up a series of beautiful volleys, each section firing by command of its sergeant. There is nothing to equal the effect of a good volley—it staggers an enemy more than five times the number of shots fired anyhow, for the men take better aim.

As the Germans dashed forward from the brook, a dense line of men issued from the woods behind and followed them. We shook the leading line so much that it wavered; but the other carried it forward when it reached it, and down they came on us, a great, confused mass, three or four deep.

It was a critical moment, Tim. I gave the order "Magazine fire!" The men pulled out the "cut-offs" which shut in the magazines and prevent the cartridges in them from being used, and fired as fast as they could possibly pull trigger and jerk out the empty cartridge cases.

I am hanged if I can see how any Germans survived

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that fire. All I can suppose is that our men were a bit excited and aimed wildly. Anyway, the enemy swept right up to the line of obstacles along the outside of the stockade, and poured through the gaps in it made by their howitzer shells. A mass of blue showed through several of the openings and over one or two of the ruined parts of the stockade, and for a moment the Germans were in our work. Luckily, our reserve companies, led by the major, dashed up in the nick of time, and with a wild yell fell on the intruders with fixed bayonets. A few minutes of furious fighting ensued, which I can tell you very little about, it was all so confused. I have a sort of hazy recollection of a lot of heads appearing over the top of the stockade, and of my men, with empty magazines, using their rifles like clubs. That's all I can remember, my first clear recollection being that of seeing the enemy running like mad, and of helping my captain in his efforts to prevent our men from following in hot pursuit!

They say that the days of hand-to-hand fighting are over; but if that was not hand-to-hand, I don't know what is. It was touch and go with us for a moment; and I believe if the Germans had had another single company to have thrown into the fight at the final critical moment, they would have carried our trenches. They greatly outnumbered us, and attacked us in the pluckiest way. They must have had an iron discipline, or they would never have got across that last three hundred yards in the face of such a deadly fire as that which our steady, well-drilled men poured on them.

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After the fight, we found the buttons of no less than four different regiments on the uniforms of the dead men. These were the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 16th. As a German regiment is 3,000 strong, they must have had close on 12,000 men against our 2,000 (ourselves and the Irish Rifles).

(The IXth and Xth Regiments were the first to attack the Irishmen. For the last attack, which Lieutenant Brady has just described, they were reinforced by the XIth Regiment from Bousval, and the XVIth from Ways. *See Map 12.*)

We had no more fighting during the day—the enemy had had enough. Judging from the number of bodies lying about in front of our regiment alone, we must have accounted for about two thousand of them, killed and wounded. And there were more in front of the Irish Rifles on our left. Altogether, I don't think I am far wrong in saying that the Germans must have lost close on five thousand men in killed and wounded in their attack on the whole of the Irish Brigade. We lost nothing like this number, naturally, for we were well sheltered by our intrenchments. But it was bad enough. The Dublins lost 9 officers and 97 men killed, and 10 officers and 270 men wounded—altogether close on four hundred out of a thousand.

Well, good-bye, Tim. This is a tremendously long letter, and though it is dated the 19th, it is really much later than that. The fact is, I began it the day after the big fight which I have just described, but found that I had so much to say that it has taken me several days to get through.—Your affectionate brother, DAN.

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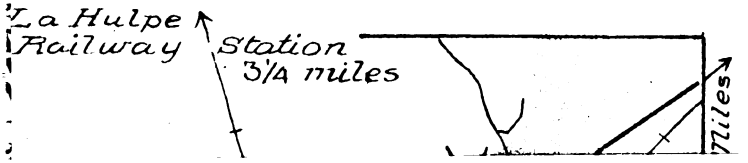

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE BATTLE AT TROU-DU-BOIS ON THE EIGHTEENTH OF JULY.

(The events herein narrated take place at the same time as the German attack on Hutte Wood, which is described in the last chapter. The positions of the contending regiments are shown on *Map 12*, their movements being indicated by dotted lines and arrow-heads.)

WHILE the 2nd German Army Corps is making gallant but fruitless attempts to carry the strongly-fortified positions of the Irish and Highland Brigades, as narrated in Lieutenant Brady's letter, an equally sanguinary fight is raging around the Guards' intrenchments.

Here, you will remember, the somewhat weak attack of the 3rd Army Corps was successfully repulsed on the evening of the 17th, with rather disastrous results to the German 9th Brigade. In the night the Germans collected their scattered regiments, and restored the order temporarily lost during the progress of the fight. Their commander, impressed by the manner in which the British had repulsed his attack, even after the terrific artillery fire which had been poured on them, determined to make a far more vigorous onslaught on the 18th, and made preparations accordingly.

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As soon as it is light enough to see on the 18th, the German batteries (posted as shown on *Map 12*) begin a heavy bombardment of Trou-du-Bois. The four artillery regiments of the 4th Army Corps, which are assisting in the attack, open a hot fire from the hills near Fonteny, right along the front of the Guards' position, while the four artillery regiments of the 3rd Army Corps hammer it vigorously from the west. Altogether, two hundred and fifty-two field-guns and thirty-six field howitzers concentrate their fire on the unfortunate Guards; while, to make matters worse, a battalion of twenty-four heavy howitzers joins in the bombardment from behind a hill near Nivelles.

Under the terrific fire of these three hundred and twelve pieces, the neighbourhood of Trou-du-Bois village and Ellencourt Farm becomes a scene of ruin and desolation. Howitzer shells explode with deafening crashes among the houses and orchards, destroying walls and shattering trees. Great gaps appear in the line of entanglements and breaches in the fortifications. Shrapnel shells burst in the air, and project tons of bullets over buildings, fields, hedgerows, and trenches.

For four hours this terrible fire goes on without ceasing. In spite of the shelter afforded by the numerous covered-in trenches ("splinter-proofs") which the Guardsmen have constructed behind their line of intrenchments, they lose heavily. To be obliged to sit in a stuffy, confined trench dug in the ground and roofed over with balks of timber covered with damp earth, the bottom of the trench muddy and wet from the heavy rain of the previous night, listen-

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ing to the continual crash of exploding shells, occasionally half-choked by the stinking fumes of a howitzer's high explosive, knowing that at any moment one might drop through the light roof overhead and bring death and destruction with it, is enough to try the nerves of the bravest men very highly. Yet this is what the trim London Guardsmen have to endure for two hundred and forty long minutes, each of which may well seem an hour to many of them.

The British gunners make valiant efforts to reply to the German guns; but with less success than last night, for the enemy has taken greater pains to conceal his batteries from view. It is practically impossible, however, to conceal as many as two hundred and fifty guns entirely, so the British do see something to aim at, and manage to inflict heavy loss on several batteries. They themselves suffer severely, and it is only by dint of constantly changing the positions of their guns that they are able to take their share in the artillery duel. Eventually the British field batteries are silenced, the only ones to continue firing being the 37th and 65th Howitzer Batteries, the latter of which is sent from Mousty at about 6 a.m. to reinforce the right of the line.

At seven o'clock, when the bombardment has been in progress for about three hours, the German infantry begin their attack. Profiting by the fact that their artillery prevents the British riflemen from manning the trenches, their advance is fairly rapid. They are not, however, altogether unmolested, for the two howitzer batteries at once

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turn their attention to them, and the field batteries again come into action. Hampered as they are by the rain of shells falling around them from the enemy's artillery, the British gunners stand their ground nobly. They lose heavily, but thanks to the care they have taken in placing their guns in positions as inconspicuous as possible, they are able to remain in action and severely harass the attacking infantry.

The Germans divide their attack into two parts—a feint or pretended attack, and a real attack. (*See Map 12.*)

The 9th Brigade carries out the feint attack as follows:—The 1st Battalion (1,000 men) of the XVIIIth Regiment advances in four lines, a company (250 men) in each, the men about four yards apart. These lines follow each other at distances of about three or four hundred yards.

When the first line arrives within about half a mile of the Scots Guards' trenches, it lies down, opens fire, and is gradually joined by the other three lines. The whole battalion is now in one line, the men lying close beside each other, and keeping up a steady fire on the British trenches. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the XVIIIth remain about half a mile behind the 1st, ready to dash forward and join it should the general suddenly decide to convert this feint attack into a real one. The XVIIth Regiment, which was so severely handled by the Scots Guards last night, stays in Baulers as a reserve.

While the feint attack is proceeding smoothly, the real attack is made very vigorously from Witterzee. The 11th

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Brigade (XXIst and XXIInd Regiments) guards the left of the German line from any sudden counter-attack by the British from the north, while the whole of the 10th and 12th Brigades (12,000 men) throw themselves against the Coldstreams' trenches in the following manner :—

The 1st/XXIIIrd * advances in the same way as the XVIIth does in the feint attack. First comes a swarm of skirmishers, picking their way from cover to cover, keeping no sort of line. They act as scouts and sharpshooters, picking off any of the British who show their heads, and crawling up as close as they can to try to find out the exact position of the trenches. Then comes the first company in a line about a thousand yards long, followed at intervals by the three other companies of the battalion.

The British artillery is now reinforced by the arrival of the 7th and 14th Batteries from Bruyère, and its fire is so greatly increased that it brings the first company of Germans to a halt three-quarters of a mile from the trenches. The latter is presently joined by the 2nd Company, which carries it forward about a hundred yards, when the British fire again stops the advance. The 3rd and then the 4th Company join the leading line, each time carrying it forward another hundred yards or so. The whole of the 1st Battalion is now united in one line, and arrives within a thousand yards of the British, when the latter's heavy shrapnel fire again brings the advance to a halt.

Behind the 1st come the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the

* 1st/XXIIIrd means 1st Battalion of the XXIIIrd Regiment.

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XXIIIrd, following one behind the other. Advancing company by company, they strike the 1st Battalion in a succession of waves. Each reinforcement carries the leading line forward some distance, until, by the time the whole of the XXIIIrd (about 2,500 men, allowing for casualties) is within a quarter of a mile from the trenches, it is formed into one solid line.

Several times during this advance the Coldstreams make gallant efforts to man their trenches and open a rifle fire on the Germans. The shell fire of the enemy's artillery, however, increases in violence as time goes on. A storm of shrapnel bullets from the batteries to the south of Trou-du-Bois enfilades the trenches, and sweeps away the Guards by dozens. Finally, all that the officers can do is to order their men to lie in their splinter-proofs, rifle in hand, ready to dash out the moment the enemy's artillery stops firing and his infantry charges.

The Germans are in no hurry to make this final charge. The XXIIIrd Regiment is so close to the British lines that the deadly fire from its 2,500 rifles soon silences the defenders' field batteries, any attempt to work the guns near Trou-du-Bois meaning certain death to the gunners. It is owing to this that the XXIVth Regiment is practically unharmed, except by the British howitzers, when it advances to reinforce the XXIIIrd.

The state of affairs around Trou-du-Bois at this moment is shown on *Map 12*. The British rifles and guns are silent; the whole of the village and neighbouring farms is devastated by an artillery fire which has certainly in-

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creased to almost double its former intensity in the last few minutes. The XXIVth Regiment is just about to close on the XXIIIrd.

Suddenly the scene changes, as if touched by a magician's wand. A sheaf of rockets soars high into the air above Witterzee, and bursts into hundreds of flaming stars. The crash of exploding shells suddenly ceases. The hoarse roar of nearly 6,000 voices mixes with the ringing of bugles and beating of drums, and the two German regiments charge forward in a dense mass, five or six deep, on the British position.

Before their enemy reaches the much battered line of obstacles, the Guards are in their trenches. Rifles and machine guns roll out a deadly chorus; the gunners load their guns with case-shot, and pour clouds of leaden bullets on the serried ranks of the assailants.

The Germans fall by hundreds before that terrific discharge. They are thrown into terrible confusion by the leading men falling over the lines of wire entanglement. They reel under the stunning blows of the British Maxims and rifles. Several land mines laid by the sappers during the night explode under their feet, and fling great columns of smoke and earth up to the sky. They waver, halt, a British cheer goes up, and then—

A dense mass of blue hurls itself into the Germans from behind, and bears them forward with fresh impetus. It is the whole of the 10th Brigade, another 6,000 men, which has been following in support of the attacking column.

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Like the rush of a mighty river swollen by winter rains, the Germans pour into the trenches. The Coldstreams, fighting valiantly with the bayonet, are swept away by this irresistible torrent. C, D, and E Companies (*see Map 9*) are simply wiped out, all the men being killed, wounded, or captured. G and H Companies line the western edge of the big orchard, and check the enemy's advance for a brief five minutes; but this is long enough to allow A and B Companies to retire behind the shelter of Ellencourt Farm. This building is concealed from the view of the enemy's artillery by the lie of the ground, and also by the surrounding orchards, so that, although it has been severely damaged in several places by stray shells, it is still capable of being defended. F Company, its garrison, holds out obstinately, and enables the remainder of the Coldstreams to form into some sort of order near the chapel.

Perceiving the success of their comrades, the XVIIIth Regiment converts its feint attack against the Scots Guards into a real one. Its three battalions rush the position. Some stubborn fighting takes place in the southern outskirts of Trou-du-Bois. The Scots make desperate efforts to hold their own, but are driven from hedge to hedge, and house to house, the enemy throwing more men into the fight when the XVIIth Regiment hurries up from Baulers.

It is evident to the British brigadier that his position is lost. The 64th Battery is overrun by the enemy, the guns captured, and the gunners killed or taken prisoners. By the most gallant efforts, the 7th and 14th Batteries, which

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have been taking part in the fight from near the Angel Inn, succeed in saving their guns. They retire to Bruyère Hill, where they are presently joined by the 73rd. The 4·7's retired early in the fight from their positions on Bois Hill, and so escape capture.

The battle now enters on a second phase.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BATTLE OF TROU-DU-BOIS.

(*Continued.*)

The First Attack on Bruyère.

MAP 13 shows the state of affairs at Trou-du-Bois at nine o'clock, half an hour after the Germans have driven the Guards from their trenches.

The Grenadiers, Buffs, and part of the Irish Guards have come into line along the road running from North Bruyère to Bruyère Farm. This, for the sake of simplicity, I will henceforth call the "Bruyère Position." The 7th, 14th, 63rd, and 73rd Field Batteries, and the 37th and 65th Howitzer Batteries, are shelling the position lately held by the British. The Lincolns and Yorkshires, sent post haste from the General Reserve at Maransart, have just arrived behind Bois Hill.

The enemy are swarming around Ellencourt Farm, where F Company of the Coldstreams is fighting bravely and hopelessly against overwhelming odds.

The remnants of the Coldstreams and Scots are in full retreat towards Bruyère, as are also the three companies of Irish, whose position near Bois Farm becomes too

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dangerously exposed to hold after the Germans capture Trou-du-Bois.

One or two of the Guards' companies have become quite demoralized, the officers and non-commissioned officers killed, and the men scattered; the survivors are bolting towards Bruyère in the greatest disorder. But the majority of the companies are kept well in hand by their officers; and though their ranks are torn by the enemy's fire, their movements are as well conducted as if they were on the barrack parade-ground at home. Every now and then a half-company faces about and fires coolly and steadily at its pursuers, while the other half-company continues its retreat. The latter then faces about and checks the Germans with its fire while the first half-company retires. In this way all parts of the force conduct their retreat, alternately firing and retiring, firing and retiring.

Suddenly the Guards are threatened with a very grave danger. Two regiments of Uhlans emerge from a valley, sweep round the corner of the Angel Inn—now a smouldering ruin—and dash towards the flying British. (This charge is shown on *Map 18* by dotted blue lines and arrow-heads.)

To the men in the Bruyère position it seems as if the Coldstreams—or what is left of them, for they are now only four companies strong—must be annihilated. They are in a bad formation for resisting a cavalry charge, for they are scattered over the ground in small bodies. There is very little time for facing round to meet the Uhlans

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fair and square, as the approach of the latter is concealed by the orchards until they are within six or seven hundred yards.

The Germans, however, receive rough treatment from the Grenadiers in the houses and gardens of North Bruyère. A deadly fire is poured on them, sweeping their lines from end to end. The Uhlans lose heavily. They evidently did not expect the village to be occupied by the British, or they would never have dared to make this charge. However, they are in for it now, so they make the best of it. They have less than half a mile to go before they reach their enemy. But what a half-mile! A storm of bullets from rifles and machine guns rakes their lines. Men and horses drop on every side. One regiment (the 2nd) suffers particularly, and finally swings round and gallops away, leaving the ground strewn thick with bodies. The other regiment is farther from the British, and succeeds in galloping into the Coldstreams, who gather in knots and fight desperately. A terrific *mêlée* takes place only a quarter of a mile in front of the steady line of Grenadiers and Buffs, neither of whom can now fire, owing to the impossibility of distinguishing friend from foe.

The struggle is soon over. Caught in an unfavourable formation for resisting cavalry, and completely taken by surprise, the Coldstreams are swept away by the rush of horsemen. The Scots succeed in withdrawing behind the Buffs, and the Irish companies from the neighbourhood of Bois Farm assemble behind the remainder of their battalion at Bruyère Farm.

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Another German cavalry attack, delivered simultaneously with that just described, meets with disaster. Galloping up from the south, a regiment of Cuirassiers also tries to cut across the line of retreat of the Guards, but suddenly blunders right on to a formidable line of wire entanglement stretching along the front of the intrenchment lately held by C Company of the Irish battalion. The Cuirassiers are thrown into great confusion by this unexpected obstacle, and at the same moment are surprised by the 13th Hussars, which regiment has been lurking behind Bruyère, seeking for an opportunity of helping the Guards in their retreat. Emerging suddenly from behind the orchards of Bruyère Farm, the Hussars fall on the disorganized Cuirassiers, scatter them in all directions, and drive them from the field with severe loss.

The few minutes which follow the successful charge of the Prussian Uhlans is the most critical time in the whole day for the British. You will understand this by looking at *Map 13*. Picture to yourself a confused mass of Uhlans and Guards covering the whole of that piece of ground on which the retreating companies are marked on the map. Then imagine the German infantry at Trou-du-Bois, upwards of 15,000 in number, advancing behind this mass until they get within 300 or 400 yards of the Grenadiers and Buffs. A resolute bayonet charge at this distance must have carried away the thin British line, and given the enemy complete possession of the Bruyère position. The consequence of this would be that the

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British and Belgian armies would have to evacuate the whole of their position, as from Bruyère Hill the Germans could see right along it.

For some reason or other, however, the Germans fail to grasp the situation. They delay the delivery of such a telling blow as this would be; their cavalry withdraw with their prisoners from under the very nose of the British, and the critical moment passes. The truth of the matter is, that the German infantry is so disorganized after its first assault on the Guards' trenches that the men are completely out of hand. Different companies, different battalions, different brigades, even different divisions, are mixed together in confused masses. Officers cannot find their men, men cannot find their companies. The batteries of the 3rd Army Corps Artillery, arriving at a gallop from their position beyond Witterzee, increase the confusion, and over an hour elapses before order is restored and the generals regain control of their troops.

This confusion, by the way, is inevitable in modern fighting. In the old days, regiments advanced to the attack in compact masses; now they are hurled on to the enemy line after line, regiment after regiment, with the result that when the final charge is delivered, the attacking line consists of a mixture of different corps. If the assault is successful, the pursuit has to be taken up by fresh troops. For instance, in the fight just described, the fresh troops were the Uhlans and Cuirassiers.

Recognizing the danger to which the British army is exposed should Bruyère be captured, the colonels of the

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Grenadiers and Buffs pile their men thickly into the firing line, and sternly repress the evident desire of their battalions to throw themselves with the bayonet on the enemy and rescue their comrades. Consequently, by the time the German infantry is ready to advance, it is confronted by a line which, though barely one and a quarter miles long, contains 24 field-guns, 12 howitzers, half a dozen Maxims, and nearly 3,000 rifles, with another 2,000 rifles in the Lincolns and Yorkshires a short distance behind, ready to throw themselves into the fight.

The moment the German horsemen retire with their prisoners, a terrific fire breaks out from the Bruyère position. From North Bruyère to Bruyère Farm the long line of rifles and guns crackles and roars and pours out a torrent of lead. The Germans are crowded in such thick masses on the old position of the Guards that they are swept away by the hundred. By degrees, however, as order is restored, the majority of their regiments retire into the shelter of the valleys to the west of Trou-du-Bois; several battalions line the hedgerows and sunken roads between the Angel Inn and the village; and a few batteries—there is not room for many—come into action in favourable positions. Ellencourt Farm is soon reduced by the fire of some field-guns, and preparations are made for a fresh advance.

The German commander has the choice of two places to attack—the Bruyère position, or Napoleon's Wood, where the West Kent is posted. The latter has been strongly intrenched during the night, as he knows from the reports

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of his scouts; whereas the Bruyère position has only just been occupied by the British. So he determines to attack Bruyère. In order, however, to prevent the West Kent from assisting the Grenadiers and Buffs with their fire, the German commander orders the 12th Artillery Regiment and a battalion of heavy howitzers at Nivelles to bombard Napoleon's Wood.

The attack on the Bruyère position is preceded by a terrific duel between the contending infantry. The two lines of riflemen, barely 1,000 yards apart, maintain a deadly fire on each other. The intervening space is swept by bullets; it is a sort of "No-Man's Land," occupied only by the dead and wounded men left there after the short tussle between the Uhlans and the Guards.

This intense rifle fire soon breaks up the field batteries of both sides. A battery of artillery is at a very great disadvantage when it is exposed to infantry fire at 1,000 yards range; and as you can see from *Map 13*, there are very few convenient places where a whole battery can be posted outside this range on the limited area occupied by the rival forces. Consequently, both the British and Germans split some of their batteries up, and send the guns singly or in pairs to find positions from which to shell their enemy. On the British side, the 14th, 63rd, and 73rd remain intact; but the guns of the 7th are stationed at intervals along the line of infantry, in positions as much concealed as possible, as shown on *Map 13*. This is generally considered to be an unusual proceeding—to mix guns with infantry; but then, circum-

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stances alter cases, and there is no room for them anywhere else.

The British 37th and 65th Howitzer Batteries render yeoman service. The officers place themselves on Bois Hill, where they lie hidden in long grass or behind hedges. From this point they watch the effect of the shells from their howitzers, which are concealed behind the hill. By means of messages and signals they tell their gunners where to aim at, and at what distance to make their shrapnel explode.

At midday the German infantry delivers a fierce assault on the Bruyère position. There is no necessity to describe the exact way in which this is made, as you know by this time the general principles adopted by the Germans when attacking.*

Line after line, the battalions advance against the Grenadiers, Buffs, and Irish Guards. These regiments, however, are not so badly exposed to the enemy's artillery fire as were the Guards who held Trou-du-Bois earlier in the day. Hence they are able to man the hedges, buildings, and sunken road along which they are extended during the whole of the German advance. The fields in front are absolutely open; no cover of any kind exists for the assailants; from some part or other of the defenders' line the whole of the foreground is swept by rifle fire.

The courage and discipline displayed by the Germans

* The actual positions of the German troops who make this assault are not shown on any map, but you will find *No. 13* is the best one on which to follow the course of the fight.

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are magnificent, and excite the unbounded admiration of their opponents. It is pitiable to see company after company of these fine fighting men almost entirely swept away by the murderous fire of rifle and machine gun. The German artillery, too, show the greatest bravery. To support their comrades in the infantry, six batteries come into action on the east side of the orchard, near the Angel Inn (*at the points marked "a" on Map 13*), and endeavour to subdue the defenders' rifle fire with a continual shower of shrapnel. Gun after gun is put out of action by losing the whole of its detachment; some batteries suffer so severely that after the battle they can barely muster a tenth of their number.

But the losses are by no means confined to the Germans. The ranks of the British are thinned by the constant hammering of their opponents' fire, in spite of the skilful way in which the men shelter themselves in hastily-dug trenches, behind hedges and garden walls, and in sunken roads.

The four batteries of field artillery also suffer many casualties. The guns are constantly forced to change their positions, owing to the enemy's riflemen finding out where they are; and eventually so many men are killed, that several of the pieces are in danger of being put out of action for want of gunners to work them.

At one o'clock, after an hour spent in fruitless attempts to push his infantry across the fire-swept fields lying between the Bruyère position and the little chapel near Ellencourt Farm, the German commander withdraws his

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THE GERMAN ARTILLERY TAKING SHELTER BEHIND BOIS HILL.

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attacking lines under the shelter of Bois Hill and the orchards in its neighbourhood. His men have suffered terribly, and, in spite of the most valiant efforts, have nowhere succeeded in approaching within half a mile of the British line. He sees plainly that unless he can previously overwhelm his opponents with a heavy artillery fire, he cannot hope to carry their position.

But where is he to place his guns? You have already seen how limited is the space which is at his disposal on the actual battlefield. Some of his batteries are in action, it is true, but they are far too few in number to crush his enemy, and, besides, are fighting at a great disadvantage—namely, under the fire of the British riflemen. The large majority are lying idle in the valleys west of Bois Hill, owing to the lack of suitable positions from which to open fire.

Eventually he orders a movement which he ought to have thought of earlier. The artillery of the 4th Army Corps, which had moved up to Trou-du-Bois when the village was captured, is sent back to the south again, with instructions to find a good position from which to shell the British at long range.

Some time elapses before the German artillery officers find a suitable place; for, as you will see from *Map 12*, the high ground on which Trou-du-Bois is built masks the position now held by the Buffs and Grenadiers from a bombardment at anything but a very long range. Eventually, however, the whole of the 14th, 15th, and 16th Artillery Regiments (eighteen batteries) come into action near Fon-

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teny at half-past two. (*At the points "c," "c," "c," on Map 12.*)

The only disadvantage to this position is that it is nearly three miles from South Bruyère. At this distance it is extremely difficult to "make good practice" with field-guns, for two reasons. One is, that by the time a small shrapnel shell has travelled three miles, it is losing its speed, and when it bursts its bullets fly out in a slack sort of way, and do not do much damage. The other reason, and a very important one too, is that it is almost impossible to observe the effect of your fire on an enemy three miles away, especially if he is concealed as the British are. You may be able to do it in a country like South Africa, where the atmosphere is very clear; but in most European countries, unless it happens to be an exceptionally fine day, it is very difficult indeed. True, the Germans place artillery officers in the neighbourhood of Trou-du-Bois, who direct the fire of their guns in much the same way as the major of the British 63rd Battery did yesterday. (*See page 315.*) But then this method of firing, as you can easily see, is slow, and what the Germans want is to overwhelm the British infantry with a rapid and accurate bombardment. Consequently, although the German guns fire an immense amount of ammunition, they do not have nearly the same effect as they had on the Guards earlier in the day. Still, they make the Bruyère position very uncomfortable, and cause many casualties.

From 2.30 to 4 p.m. the German artillery keeps up a

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continual bombardment, while the infantry rests and reorganizes itself after the confusion caused by its unsuccessful attack. The Grenadiers, Irish, and Buffs lie quietly in their trenches; the field batteries remain silent behind Bruyère Hill; and practically there is a complete cessation of firing on the battleground occupied by the contending infantry.

While this pause in the infantry fight lasts, let us see what the British heavy guns are doing.

A 4·7 is not so easily and quickly moved about as an ordinary 15-pounder field-gun; so when it becomes evident earlier in the morning that the Germans are going to make a serious attack on the Guards at Trou-du-Bois, the four guns of the 100th Heavy Battery are withdrawn from the neighbourhood of the village. This is done with the twofold object of avoiding capture, and of finding a favourable place from which to worry the enemy with long-range fire.

The battery tries several positions, and eventually, by order of Major-General Carey, proceeds at midday to the "Lion of Waterloo" (*Map 12*). Here it comes into action against the Germans at Trou-du-Bois, firing at a range of over three and a half miles. As the gunners cannot see the effect of their fire at this great distance—indeed they cannot see the enemy at all—the major of the 100th places himself inside the southern edge of Napoleon's Wood, where he obtains a clear view of the enemy. A telegraph section of the sappers lays a line joining him to his battery, and the major, snugly concealed behind the

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trees, watches the effect of his shells. He notes carefully the places where they fall, and constantly telephones to the lieutenants in charge of the guns, telling them to aim a little more to the right or to the left, or at a slightly greater or less range, according to whether the last shot was a good one or not. In this way he controls the fire of his battery just as if he were firing each gun himself.

This method of firing is slow, as I have just remarked; but on the other hand it is accurate, and a slow succession of well-aimed shells from a 4·7 is worth any number of erratic shots, however rapidly the latter may be fired.

Of course it is a very risky proceeding sending four valuable 4·7's so far away from the infantry, especially as the enemy's cavalry is known to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of the "Lion." But then the situation is grave, and demands strong measures. In war, too, the general who does not mind taking risks is usually successful. It is so in this case; for the constant succession of lyddite and shrapnel shells, which apparently come from nowhere in particular, and seem to drop from the clouds, considerably puzzles the Germans, and chases their batteries from place to place with annoying persistence and very destructive results. The safety of the 100th Battery itself is assured—first, by the enemy's ignorance of its position; second, by the presence of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, which is guarding that end of the British line; and third, by an escort of two companies of the Middlesex Cyclist Volunteers.

Later on in the day, after 2.30, four guns of the 101st and 102nd Heavy Batteries retire from their original

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position near the Seaforth Highlanders, and place themselves near Flamandes (*point "b" on Map 12*), with the special object of annoying the three German artillery regiments south of Fonteny. This they do with considerable success; for although the range is four and a half miles, that distance is well within the powers of a 4·7. The commanding officers are well posted in a copse near Botte Redoubt, where they are only two and a half miles from the enemy's batteries. Provided with strong field-glasses and telescopes for watching the effect of their fire, accompanied by men who measure the distance of the enemy with range-finding instruments, and keeping in constant communication with their batteries by means of telephones, the artillery officers direct the fire of their 4·7's so well that several of the German guns are put out of action, and their batteries are forced to change their positions constantly.

In this way, by means of a few well-placed, skilfully-handled long-range guns, the British artillery is able to inflict considerable loss on the numerous German batteries, thus saving the defenders of Bruyère from the destructive effects of such a bombardment as that which overwhelmed the Guards at Trou-du-Bois in the morning.

The Second Attack on Bruyère.

Shortly after half-past three, the Germans commence their second attack on the Bruyère position. This time they meet with greater success, as they are supported by the fire of a larger number of batteries.

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They advance, as before, in line after line, each composed of men placed several yards apart. When the first line emerges from the orchards which stretch almost without a break between Trou-du-Bois village and the Angel Inn, the four British batteries again come into action (*Map 13*), and greet it with a well-directed shrapnel fire. This is almost the only opposition that the Germans encounter during the earlier stages of their advance; for their field-guns away to the south are raking the hollow road occupied by the Buffs from end to end, and the village of North Bruyère, where the Grenadiers are posted, is being severely battered by the enemy's howitzers stationed behind Bois Hill. Bruyère Farm and its orchards are also receiving a great deal of attention from the German artillery, which keeps up a steady bombardment in spite of the destructive fire which, as we have just seen, the British 4·7's are directing on it at long range.

In consequence of the heavy storm of shrapnel shells which sweeps the position they have hastily prepared for defence, most of the British infantry have retired to the cover afforded by the low ground lying behind the Bruyère position (*to the right-hand top corner of Map 13*). Here and there, a few men—perhaps a section or a half-company—have been left in sheltered positions along the road and near the villages. These maintain a steady fire on the attacking Germans, but they are not sufficiently numerous to do more than slightly delay their advance.

From time to time, however, the leading line of the Germans is brought to a halt by the defenders' combined

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rifle and artillery fire. On these occasions, another line emerges from the orchards, slowly closes up with the first, strikes it, and carries it forward again. In this way the successive *thin* lines of the attackers gradually mix together until, eventually, the leading one becomes a *thick* line of men, shoulder to shoulder. And still line after line issues from the orchards of Ellencourt Farm—there seems to be no end to the number of the enemy.

The situation begins to look grave. It seems likely that the events of the morning will be repeated—that the enemy will succeed in getting within two or three hundred yards, from which distance he will again swamp the British by an overwhelming rush in superior numbers.

General Carey makes the best preparations he can to prevent this. The infantry behind the hill hold themselves in readiness to rush to their positions when the critical moment arrives, and the general's aide-de-camp gallops up to the colonels of the Lincolnshire and Yorkshire Regiments, and hands them notes containing certain instructions.

As they approach nearer and nearer to the position they are attacking, the Germans pile on more and more men. Line after line dashes forward and joins the leading one. Very little time is wasted in rifle firing; yard by yard the waves of blue surge forward; by tens and dozens the shrieking, bursting shrapnel shells sow the soil around the British trenches with bullets. What tons of lead the Belgian ploughmen will turn up next year!

The Germans are now less than four hundred yards

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away. They halt; for their artillery, firing at a great range, is not very accurate, and any further advance at present will bring the attacking infantry into the shell-swept area in front of the defenders' trenches. A terrific rifle fire breaks out from the leading line, now two deep in places, and others press forward to join it.

A rocket, sent up by one of General Carey's orderlies, whizzes into the air from behind Bruyère Hill, close to where the general and his staff are standing. As it breaks into a shower of stars, the bugles and whistles of the British battalions ring loudly along the hillside. Led by their officers, the different companies dash for their particular parts of the line. The Grenadiers swarm into the houses and gardens of North Bruyère. The Buffs man the sunken road between the two villages. The Irish Guards rush into their trenches around Bruyère Farm.

The British are just in time. The enemy's batteries, informed by signallers that all is ready for the final charge, turn their fire away from Bruyère to the east. The German infantry stops firing; drums beat, bugles blow, bayonets flash in the sun, cheers rend the air, and a solid mass of men, two or three deep, charges forward.

The British line breaks into a deafening roar of firing. Two thousand five hundred rifles strike the serried ranks of the attackers with a succession of staggering volleys. Five machine guns, rattling and clattering, squirt them with streams of lead. Twenty-four field-guns, firing case-shot, belch forth bushels of bullets.

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The Germans reel under this terrible fire. Entire ranks are swept away, and, two hundred yards from the British, down they come to the earth, where they presently open an answering fusillade. Under cover of this, a second line, also two deep, which has been following about four hundred yards behind, comes up and joins them.

Again the Germans advance; again the terrible storm—but of what use is it to repeat a tale of slaughter? Sufficient to say that, one hundred yards from the British, the enemy comes to the ground once more. Men are not machines; flesh and blood cannot saw their way through a sheet of lead—it is *almost* a sheet of lead, this deadly fire of modern weapons at close range!

As the long lines of gallant Germans sink to the earth, thoroughly shaken by the awful ordeal through which they have passed, a great shout goes up from the British. The shout increases rapidly to a roar that stirs the blood of all who hear it to fever heat; the tumultuous din of rifles and machine guns suddenly dies away; and with hoarse yells, ringing bugles, and flashing bayonets, the Lincolns and Yorks dash through the gaps in the Buffs' line, and charge the enemy. (This charge is shown by a dotted red line on *Map 13.*)

A heavy fire strikes them; but the lads from the fens and the dales have been waiting for this moment all the day, chafing inactive under the German shells while their comrades have been bearing the brunt of the battle. Their blood is up; there is only a short hundred yards to

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go; and—well! what can stop a line of British bayonets within charging distance of an enemy? Answer, you valiant Frenchmen who fought so brilliantly under the great Napoleon; or you brave Russians who struggled with such stubborn, unreasoning obstinacy under Czar Alexander! Both of you ought to know; you had experience of the British bayonet in the Peninsula and the Crimea, and the opinion of such gallant foemen as you is of value.

"The day of the bayonet past!" Ho! ho! so might have laughed the Yorks and Lincolns if they had thought of this commonly expressed belief of certain authorities on the art of war. But they do not think. They hurl themselves on the enemy, bury their bayonets in German bodies, scatter the German lines right and left, capture German prisoners, and send the whole German attack flying pell-mell towards Trou-du-Bois.

Into the midst of this confusion gallops the 13th Hussars. Riding through the ranks of the infantry, they fall on the fugitives with lance and sword, completing their overthrow, rounding up batches of prisoners, and pursuing the survivors up to the very hedges surrounding Bois Hill.

Taking advantage of this diversion, the colonels of the Yorks and Lincolns re-form their regiments, and retire with fifteen hundred prisoners behind the Buffs' line. The Hussars are withdrawn from their pursuit with great difficulty. They suffer severely from the fire of the enemy's reserves, and only just escape, by the greatest

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good fortune, from being cut off by some German cavalry who suddenly appear on the scene.

This ends the fighting for the day. A desultory fire is kept up for a short time by the opposing infantry; but this soon dies away, and by seven o'clock not a shot from gun or rifle breaks the silence of the sunny summer's evening.

Both sides are worn out with the fourteen hours' struggle: an informal truce, arranged by nobody, disputed by none, ensues. Sentries are posted, and watch each other across the narrow plain lying between the exhausted rival armies. A host of surgeons and stretcher-bearers from both forces swarm over the ground, attending to and removing the wounded until far into the night.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SAPPERS AT WORK.

(The reader has already been told of the share which the engineers of the British army corps took in the preparation of the intrenchments of the Guards and Irish Brigades. In this chapter the story of the campaign is interrupted for a brief period in order to describe the part played by the sappers in the battle of July 18th.)

JOHN WESTON, the young war correspondent of that famous halfpenny newspaper *The Daily Terror*, sits down half-famished to a well-earned meal in a Brussels hotel at eleven o'clock at night on the 17th of July.

He has just completed a hard day's work. From sunrise until darkness set in, he travelled to and fro, from end to end of the British position along the Dyle, making copious notes of the battle near Ways Ridge and at Witterzee. Then, when the fight was over, he bicycled off to Brussels, wrote his account, and—after some delay in getting it passed by an overworked press censor *—telegraphed it to the office of his paper in Fleet Street, London.

* A press censor is an officer appointed to read all the accounts sent to newspapers by war correspondents. His signature or stamp on the correspondent's message is necessary, or the post office will not send the telegram.

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John Weston is new to his work; in fact, to-day's is the first battle he has seen, and he feels a certain glow of satisfaction at having accomplished his task successfully. At the same time, his brow is wrinkled with thought, for he is reading a letter which he has just received from his chief. It runs as follows:—

"'DAILY TERROR' OFFICE, FLEET STREET, E.C.
July 14, 19—.

DEAR WESTON,—The remark was made to me to-day, 'What on earth do all the sappers who belong to an army corps do during a battle?' This gave me an idea. I want you to devote your attention entirely to the Royal Engineers during some big fight. Do not trouble yourself about what the infantry, cavalry, and artillery are doing; just go and see how the sappers employ themselves, and write a full account of them.—Yours sincerely, etc., etc."

"That's all very fine," thinks Weston to himself, "but how am I to know a sapper from any other Tommy in this confounded drab uniform. It strikes me I shall have a precious hard job finding them."

Some one hits him a hearty slap on the back, and a cheery voice says,—

"Hallo, youngster, you look worried! What's up?"

Weston looks up, and recognizes Black, the artist of *The Weekly Picture*, and an old hand at the game of war. He confides his trouble to him, and Black quickly disposes of it in a light-hearted way.

"That's all, is it? Well, I've got nothing special on

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hand to-morrow, and it will just suit me to make a sketch or two of the sappers. We will dig them out together. How shall we go down?"

"I've got a bicycle," says Weston.

"And I have not," replies Black, "so let us try the railway. It will be pretty busy forwarding stores and food, but with a little luck we shall find a hole big enough for the two of us in some train or other."

Accordingly, at sunrise on the following morning, the two friends meet at the railway station. They have a slice of luck to begin with, for the first person they see on the platform is a young subaltern of engineers, a friend of Black's. The artist accosts him with a "Hallo! what are you doing here?"

"I ought to ask *you* that question," replies the subaltern with a laugh. "I am the boss about here—in charge of this piece of the line. I belong to the 10th Railway Company, you know. My men are working the engines, and keeping the line in repair. Jolly hard work it is, too! A party of the enemy's cavalry managed to get round by the Forest of Soignies last night, and made a raid on the line. They made an awful mess of one of the bridges, and I am just off to repair the damage. Come along with me."

He takes them with him in a spare corner of a train which is carrying rails, sleepers, and huge balks of wood, and they puff out of the station towards the sound of distant firing. After a few miles they come to a river, and the train stops.

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"This is the bridge damaged by the enemy," says the subaltern, "and we are repairing it."

They have scarcely time to get down before the trucks are surrounded by a crowd of workmen, who rapidly proceed to unload them. The trio stroll on and look at the destroyed bridge. The great iron girders are half lying in the water and half supported by the stone piers, off which the enemy has blown them with charges of gun-cotton. A large number of sappers, assisted by some civilian workmen, have already repaired the greater part of the bridge; it will be completed in another day.

"You can cross by those temporary bridges down there," says the subaltern, pointing to two wooden bridges alongside the old one.

They say good-bye, and descend the bank. As they cross the bridge, they notice that it has been made by piling rocks and bags full of sand in the river, which is only about twelve feet deep, and stretching balks of timber across from pile to pile. On these have been laid the planks forming the roadway.

As they leave the river behind, Weston remarks, "Well, so far, I have seen nothing but sappers!"

They trudge along, and the booming of the guns grows louder; they are approaching the army. Presently they climb up a steep hill, look cautiously over the top, and find that they are well out of the enemy's range, and can get a capital view over a great part of the position occupied by the British army. They settle down on a big rock and get out their field-glasses.

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To the south of them is a long range of low hills, on which the British infantry and artillery are stationed. Beyond this range is the enemy. The country, generally, is undulating; none of the hills are very high. The German artillery batteries are busy shelling the British; the sound of a terrific cannonade rolls up from the south and south-west.

On the top of a small hill to the left of Weston and Black are several drab-clad figures. A group of horses and several carts are standing at the foot of the hill. Mounted men and cyclists are continually dashing up, and then riding off again—evidently messengers. Signallers are waving flags in a succession of strokes, some long, some short, to other signallers in the distance. The hill is General French's headquarters.

The noise of wheels moving over stony ground causes the war correspondent to look round. There is a road behind him, and somewhat to his right, with a line of telegraph poles. At several of these the wire has been broken, and men in drab are busy repairing the damage. From the nearest pole, a six-horsed wagon, with the drivers mounted on the three "near" (left-hand) horses, moves slowly towards Weston, and eventually passes on in the direction of Headquarters Hill. He notices that a wire is uncoiling itself from a big drum in the wagon, and that men are hard at work sticking light poles into the ground at intervals, and suspending the wire along their tops.

"Those are sappers," says Black, pencil and sketchbook

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in hand. "They are connecting the general's position with the local telegraph line. That is one of the air-line wagons of a Telegraph Section, R.E. As soon as it reaches headquarters, the general will be able to telegraph direct home—to the War Office, if he likes."

"Humph!" says Weston, and writes notes.

A two-horsed cart starts off from Headquarters Hill, and moves away to the right. As it advances, a long, snaky-looking, black line runs out at the back, and stretches along the ground.

"What is that?" inquires the war correspondent, pointing towards the cart.

Black puts up his field-glasses.

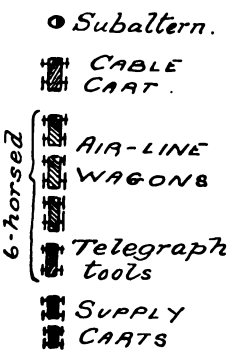

FIG. 44.—A TELEGRAPH SECTION of the Royal Engineers carries eight miles of cable for laying on the ground or across the bed of a river, and fifteen miles of telegraph line, with a large number of light poles. A section consists of about fifty men, half of whom are mounted. Four sections make a Telegraph Division, which forms part of an army corps.

"The cable-cart belonging to the Telegraph Section," he says. "It is probably stretching that cable between headquarters and the Guards at Trou-du-Bois, nearly four miles away. In less than an hour the general will be able to communicate direct with the brigadier there. Hallo! There's a balloon going up!"

About half a mile away to the left a balloon is just rising above some trees. The artist wants to sketch it, so they start off in that direction.

As they approach, they see that the balloon is anchored

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by a rope to a wagon pulled by a team of four horses. The rope is wound round a big drum with handles, by which the men can wind the balloon up and down. Another wagon is standing close by, filled with long steel cylinders full of gas for inflating the balloon.

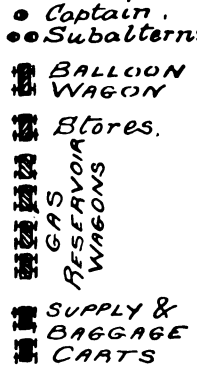

FIG. 45.—A BALLOON SECTION of the Royal Engineers. One is attached to every army corps, and carries six large military balloons, a number of tubes of gas for filling them, and a mile of telephone wire. There are fifty-five men, half of whom are mounted.

By the first wagon is seated an officer with a telephone instrument strapped to his ears. He is busy writing down what the officer in the air is telling him about the enemy's movements. Several messengers with bicycles are grouped near him. Occasionally the officer folds up a piece of paper, hands it to one of them, and the messenger dashes off towards headquarters.

The enemy, of course, has spotted the balloon, and from time to time a shell drops somewhere near the wagon and bursts. It is too great a range, however, for accurate firing. A balloon is also a difficult thing to hit, as it is always swaying to and fro in the air. Even if struck, not very much damage would be done, unless a shell actually exploded inside it. It is a different matter, however, if the little car in which the balloonist sits is struck.

On several occasions in South Africa the British war-balloons received very rough treatment from the Boer riflemen. So often was the one in Ladysmith hit one

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day, that the gas gradually escaped out of the holes, and the balloon sank slowly to the earth. At Magersfontein and other battles, the officers in the balloons, in spite of being the target of a hundred rifles, were able to give the generals very valuable information about the enemy's movements, and to indicate to the artillery the position of the hostile guns, concealed by rocks and bushes from the view of a person on the level of the ground.

Railways, telegraphs, balloons—that makes three lots of sappers Weston has seen. His notes are growing voluminous. As they turn away, a staff-officer—an old friend of Black's—canters past. He sees him, and pulls up. The artist asks him what is going on.

"There's a big fight at Hutte Wood, and another at Trou-du-Bois," he says. "The artillery of both sides are keeping up a fire on what they can see of each other. But what are you doing here?"

Black explains that they are trying to find out what all the sappers are doing.

"Well, you will see plenty of them presently, if you go up that hill," and he points towards Napoleon's Wood.

They trudge off as directed, and climb the hill, which they find occupied by a few infantry. Scarcely have they arrived at the top, when a team of four horses, dragging what at first sight looks like a field artillery limber and carriage, arrives at the foot, followed by several mounted and dismounted men and a pack mule. The subaltern riding in front holds up his hand, and the drivers pull up. The back part of the wagon is

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unhooked from the front; one driver hitches his pair of horses to one part, the other driver takes the other, and the men divide themselves between the two.

The subaltern gives some orders to a sergeant, who leads one party off towards a small farmhouse about a quarter of a mile away. The other party ascends the hill on which Black and Weston are standing, and pulls up close to them. The men dismount, open the cart —which Weston sees is full of axes, saws, and all sorts of tools—and take out a quantity of strong, broad, white tape and several bundles of little pickets. As the subaltern points to this place and that, the men drive in the pickets and stretch the tape between them, finally forming an irregular figure on the ground.

"Sappers again!" Weston exclaims, as he catches sight of the letters "R.E." on a man's shoulder-straps.

He is right. They are engineers, who are tracing the plan of a redoubt on the ground, to resist the enemy should he try to get round Napoleon's Wood. Presently a party of infantry arrives, followed by a wagon containing picks and shovels. These are issued to the men, and they begin digging the trenches of the redoubt and piling the earth up in front to form a parapet. Several sappers walk about, showing the infantry where to throw the earth, and how to make the redoubt generally.

This party of sappers is half a section of a field company, R.E.; the other half is that which has just gone off towards the farmhouse. There is an explosion there presently, and Weston looks round in time to see

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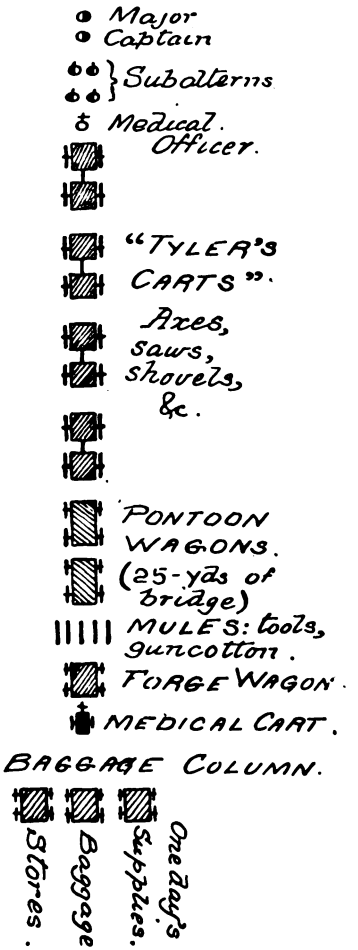

FIG. 46.—A PONTOON TROOP

of the Royal Engineers belongs to every army corps. It consists of 132 mounted and 81 dismounted men. It carries enough pontoons and spars to make a bridge 185 yards long for infantry, 105 for cavalry, and 75 for artillery. Besides the wagons shown in the diagram, there are four carts for carrying food, baggage, and stores.

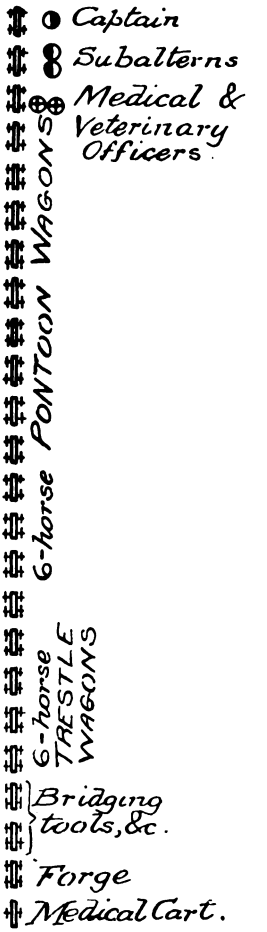

FIG. 47.—A FIELD COMPANY

of the Royal Engineers is attached to every infantry division, and there is also an extra one with the corps troops of an army corps. It consists of 59 mounted and 153 dismounted men. One Tyler's cart and a pack mule forms a section under command of a subaltern.

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the roof and walls descending to the earth in a shower. The sappers have blown it up with guncotton, because it would, if left standing, afford good cover for the enemy's riflemen attacking the redoubt.

There is a big, solitary tree about fifty yards from where the infantry are digging. This must come down, or it will help the enemy's artillery to obtain the range of the redoubt. So a sapper strings some small pieces of guncotton on a cord, hangs it round the trunk of the tree, lights a slow match, and retires to a discreet distance. The guncotton explodes, cuts the trunk clean through, and the tree crashes down.

A few minutes after the farmhouse has been blown up, Weston notices a long column of wagons moving past the rear of the hill. As they pass, he sees that there are sixteen big six-horsed wagons, each carrying a great flat-bottomed boat with square-shaped ends. Several other wagons follow, and about a hundred men, nearly half of whom are mounted.

"Who are those people?" he inquires of an infantry officer who is standing watching them with his glasses. "That is the sappers' Pontoon Troop," answers the officer. "They are going to make a bridge over that river," pointing to the Hain, running in a valley at the foot of the hill.

The wagons pull up in a long line close to the gently-sloping banks. Little parties of men form round each, lift the pontoons down, and put them in the water. Balks of wood, planks, ropes, and anchors are hauled out of the

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wagons. The pontoons are placed with one end of each pointing to the bank, about ten feet apart. Long balks are laid across from pontoon to pontoon, and on top of these are lashed planks for the roadway. In less than half an hour the bridge is complete, but is lying alongside the bank, and not across the stream. "What is the good of it?" thinks Weston. Presently he sees.

One end of the bridge is held fast to the bank. The other end, which is "up-stream," is shoved out. The current catches it, and the bridge slowly swings across the river, the moving end describing a big circle. Shortly before it arrives in its proper position, the men who are standing in the ends of the pontoons throw out anchors. They then hold on to the anchor-ropes, and gradually pay them out until the bridge is in the required position, when they make them fast to cleats in the bows of the pontoons. The men at the ends connect the bridge to each bank, and the whole operation is completed in less than half an hour.

The sappers have several other ways of making a pontoon bridge, which they often have to do under fire; but the way Weston has just seen is the quickest. If the enemy's fire is too hot, the bridge can be made behind an island or under some sheltered bank, dropped down with the current, and then swung across where it is wanted.

Shortly after the bridge is completed, two troops of cavalry appear on the opposite bank, cross over, and pass

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close by the redoubt. The horses are covered with sweat and dust, the men look fatigued but pleased with themselves. An officer riding at the head of one of the troops falls out, and chats for a moment with the subaltern of the field company on the hill.

"We had a capital day," Weston hears him say. "Went about forty miles. Got right round the enemy's flank, blew up a bridge on the railway from X——, and made a mess of several telegraph lines. He will not be able to use that railway for bringing up his heavy stores for some time."

"Who was that?" asks Weston, as the officer spurs off after his men.

"That's Smith," replies the subaltern, "commanding the 1st Field Troop, R.E. He has been out with the cavalry cutting the enemy's communications, and seems to have had a good time."

Artist and correspondent trudge off once more, this time in the direction of headquarters. Dusk is approaching, and firing has almost stopped.

"Hang it all!" Weston observes as they plod along. "That makes six lots of sappers we have seen to-day. Are there any more?"

"Yes," replies the artist, "there ought to be several. Their corps' motto is '*Ubique*,' so you must expect to see them everywhere!"

They pass several bivouacs, where fires are burning and savoury smells from steaming cooking-pots greet their nostrils. The supply wagons have brought up the day's

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food, and several parties of infantry swing past Black and Weston on the way to the camping places of their battalions.

Suddenly they come to a road. Along it, puffing and blowing, comes a great engine like a steam-roller, pulling a long train of heavy trucks piled high with all sorts of stores. This is the very latest addition to a modern army —a Steam Road Transport Train, worked by the 45th Fortress Company of the Royal Engineers. The men call the engine a "steam sapper"!

Headquarters presents a busy scene when they arrive. A little village of tents has sprung up at the foot of the hill. Outside one of them is a notice-board bearing the inscription, "Telegraph Office. 1st Telegraph Division, R.E."—the sappers Weston saw this morning have evidently finished laying their lines. A war correspondent occasionally comes up to the tent and endeavours to get off a telegram, but without success—the line is too busy with military matters.

A little farther on they come to a tent with a big placard, "Post Office. 24th Middlesex."

"The 24th Middlesex! Why, they are volunteers!" exclaims Weston.

Yes, *Engineer* volunteers; but here they are, all the same, doing post-office work at the front!

They come across several wagons, the shapes of which remind them of the familiar gypsy van at home. An officer comes out of one of them with a bundle of printed papers. He goes to the next, receives a pile of maps from

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a smart-looking sergeant, and disappears in the direction of the general's tent.

The two friends examine these khaki-coloured wagons. On one of them is printed in black letters, "Printing Wagon, Field Park, R.E.;" on the other, "Photographic Wagon, Field Park, R.E." They contain small presses for printing orders, and materials for making maps and plans from the survey sketches made by engineer and staff officers who have been out reconnoitring. These maps and orders are then given to the officers commanding the various battalions, batteries, and regiments in the army.

Weston is just remarking that "that should be about all the sappers we shall see to-day," when a bright beam of white light flashes across the sky somewhere in the direction of the ruined railway bridge they passed this morning.

"There's the electric light," remarks a man who is passing to another. "That must be the Search Light Unit of the Engineers. They are probably lighting the bridge over the Y——, so that the railway people can go on mending it during the night."

As Weston turns to Black with a laugh, and the remark that "the question addressed to my chief will be pretty fully answered," a number of officers come cantering up the little street of tents. Every one jumps up, stands to attention, and salutes the big, broad-shouldered man riding at the head of the party.

"Hallo! Who's that?" exclaims the young war correspondent. "I seem to know his face."

The war artist laughs.

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"I expect you do," he says, with a twinkle in his eye. "That is the commander-in-chief, on a visit, probably, to General French. He goes by the name of Kitchener!"

John Weston meditates for a moment, and then remarks thoughtfully,—

"Why, he is a sapper too."

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE EVENING AFTER THE BATTLE.

(In this chapter you look at the situation on the evening of July 18th from Prince Lebenfeld's point of view. We—that is, you and I, reader—discuss several important tactical questions, thereby gathering the reasons which lead the German commander-in-chief to devise a new and bold scheme for defeating the British.)

PRINCE LEBENFELD has a knotty problem to solve on the evening of July the 18th. His brow is wrinkled with thought as he pores over a large map that is laid on a table before him in the little house in Quatre Bras where he has established his head-quarters.

Speaking briefly, this problem is as follows:—

His attack on the British army has, on the whole, proved a failure. True, he has captured Trou-du-Bois, but only to find that the enemy has taken up a second line at Bruyère, which he has been unable to carry, in spite of the gallant efforts of the 3rd Army Corps. He has also taken Ways Ridge and Glabais; but then these places were only very weakly held, and evidently not intended for very obstinate defence. Everywhere else the British are occupying the same position that they were in at daybreak, unshaken by the constant bombardment of

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the German guns and the vigorous attacks of the German infantry.

What do you think Prince Lebenfeld ought to do? Shall he continue to-morrow the attacks which he started to-day, or shall he devise some new plan for defeating his enemy?

Look at his men; they are exhausted. Since the capture of Namur on the morning of the 16th, they have been marching and fighting for three consecutive days. Their losses in the last two have been very heavy. The 6th Brigade alone, in its attack on Hutte Wood to-day, lost close on 3,000 in killed and wounded; while the 3rd Army Corps, in its successive assaults on Trou-du-Bois and Bruyère, has suffered to the extent of over 2,000 killed and 6,000 wounded. Altogether, the casualty lists of the whole German army show that over 16,000 men have been placed *hors de combat* in the fighting of the last two days. The roads leading towards Namur are packed with long columns of ambulances, and every train running on the hastily repaired railway bears away a cargo of suffering humanity to Germany.

What will happen if the Prince attacks to-morrow in the same way as he did to-day? Why, it is extremely likely that—as the British are sure to increase the strength of their fortifications during the night—the German losses will be greater than ever. The result of the battle which is just over shows how difficult it is to defeat an enemy who is in a strongly intrenched position, unless, as in the case of the attack on Trou-du-Bois, you

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can first of all crush him with a prolonged and overwhelming artillery fire. But then, as you can see from *Map 12*, the village was very much exposed to the German artillery bombardment on account of the large number of hills which extend around it on the south and west. These hills were very convenient for the German batteries, for they were near enough to allow them to shell Trou-du-Bois very effectively, and yet far enough away to be out of range of the Guards' rifles. The rest of the British line does not suffer from this disadvantage, for Ways Ridge screens it more or less from the distant fire of the German guns; while if the latter were put on the ridge itself, they would be very much exposed to the British riflemen, and would consequently be unable to give their infantry very much support.

Even in the case of Trou-du-Bois, although the Guards were hammered incessantly for several hours by over three hundred pieces of ordnance, yet the Germans, as you will remember, had to pile on line after line of men, and suffered severe losses, before they carried the intrenchments. How many more men the German commander would have lost had the place not been exposed to such a terrific artillery fire is shown by the awful slaughter which took place to-day in front of Hutte Wood and Bruyère.

Taking these things into consideration, the German commander-in-chief decides not to renew his attack against the front of the British position. The only thing remaining for him to do, then, is to make another flank attack.

"A flank attack! What is the good of a flank at-

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tack?" I fancy I hear you say. "Has not Prince Lebenfeld already made a flank attack? Did he not send the 3rd Army Corps on the 17th all the way round by Seigneur and Witterzee to make one on Trou-du-Bois? And after making a lot of fuss, and talking big about it, and imagining that it was going to do all sorts of wonderful things, what was the result? Why, after tiring his troops with a long march, he found when he got to Witterzee that the British had simply turned round a bit, had extended their line into Napoleon's Wood, and were facing him fair and square. His great flank attack on Trou-du-Bois turned out to be nothing more nor less than a frontal attack!"

You are quite right in your last remark, but wrong in your first; for a flank attack *is* of the greatest possible use, *if you can make it come as a surprise to the enemy.* Now that, as you will remember, was what Prince Lebenfeld tried to do on the 17th, but his plans were upset by the unexpected resistance of the 1st Mounted Infantry in Witterzee. Had this not happened, he would probably have succeeded in getting into Napoleon's Wood before the West Kent Regiment got there; and that would have been fatal to the British, for, from the wood, the Germans could have marched across the rear of their position, cut off their supplies, and surrounded them.

Another flank attack, then, is what the Prince resolves on; but this time he determines that it shall come as a surprise to the British. With this end in view, he decides to give the cavalry another whole day in which to com-

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pletely clear away any of the enemy's mounted troops who might resist his advance long enough to allow the British infantry to come up and intrench themselves.

Prince Lebenfeld orders the 4th Army Corps, which has not been engaged in the battle of the last two days, to make the flank attack. It is to march to a village called Noucelles, about two and a half miles north of Witterzee, and at dawn on the 20th to fall on the right rear of the British position.

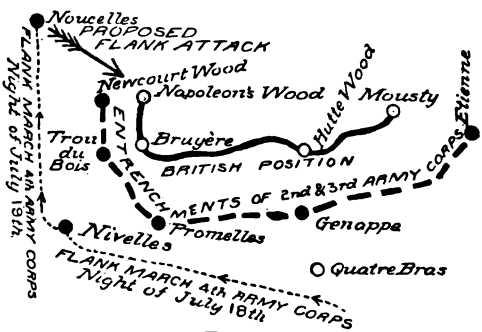

FIG. 48.

This figure explains the German commander-in-chief's scheme for attacking the British on July the 20th.

Fig. 48 shows graphically what the German commander-in-chief intends to do.

There is something else that requires careful consideration. What are the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps to do? At the present moment, reduced by 16,000 casualties, and worn out with hard fighting, they are extended in a long irregular line between Etienne and Newcourt Wood. (*See Fig. 48.*) When the 4th Army Corps leaves Quatre Bras and is well on its way to Noucelles, what

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reserve force will be available for assisting the thin line of Germans, supposing that it is suddenly attacked by a concentrated mass of British? Practically none. If they were to remain in their present position, the two army corps would be liable to a severe defeat.

To provide against this, Prince Lebenfeld orders the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps to intrench themselves along the Dyle, and between Promelles and Newcourt Wood, as shown in *Fig. 48.* They are, in fact, to take up an intrenched position facing the British.

The success of the operations planned by the commander-in-chief depends almost entirely on the secrecy observed with regard to the flank attack of the 4th Army Corps. On no account must the suspicions of the British commander be aroused; for he will then either make preparations to resist the attack, or, what is more probable, will retreat, fearing that the Germans will cut him off from Brussels and his food and ammunition supplies. Either course would be displeasing to the Prince, for his object is to capture or annihilate the whole British army corps. And without delay, too, for heavy reinforcements are coming from England, and he wishes to have his hands free to meet them.

With this object he takes three precautions.

He orders the 2nd Army Corps to make feint attacks to-morrow against the front of the British, especially in the evening, in order to engage their attention thoroughly.

He orders General Von Otendorf to sweep the country over which the 4th Army Corps will advance completely

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clear of the enemy's scouts. The cavalry are also to prevent any of the country people from overlooking the march of the infantry. The fact of the German cavalry being thus employed will not betray the commander-in-chief's intentions to the British. The latter are now accustomed to the sight of German horsemen in that part of the country; but if by any chance they should hear of an infantry force being about, their suspicions would be aroused at once, with results probably fatal to Prince Lebenfeld's plans.

Finally, he orders the march of the 4th Army Corps to be conducted entirely by night, so as to avoid being seen by the British balloon officers. As the distance to be covered is nearly fourteen miles, and as troops cannot march quickly in the dark, he divides the march into two parts. To-night, the 18th, the army corps will move to Nivelles, where it will remain quietly during the 19th. In the evening it will continue its advance to Noucelles, and get into position for making its flank attack at dawn on the 20th.

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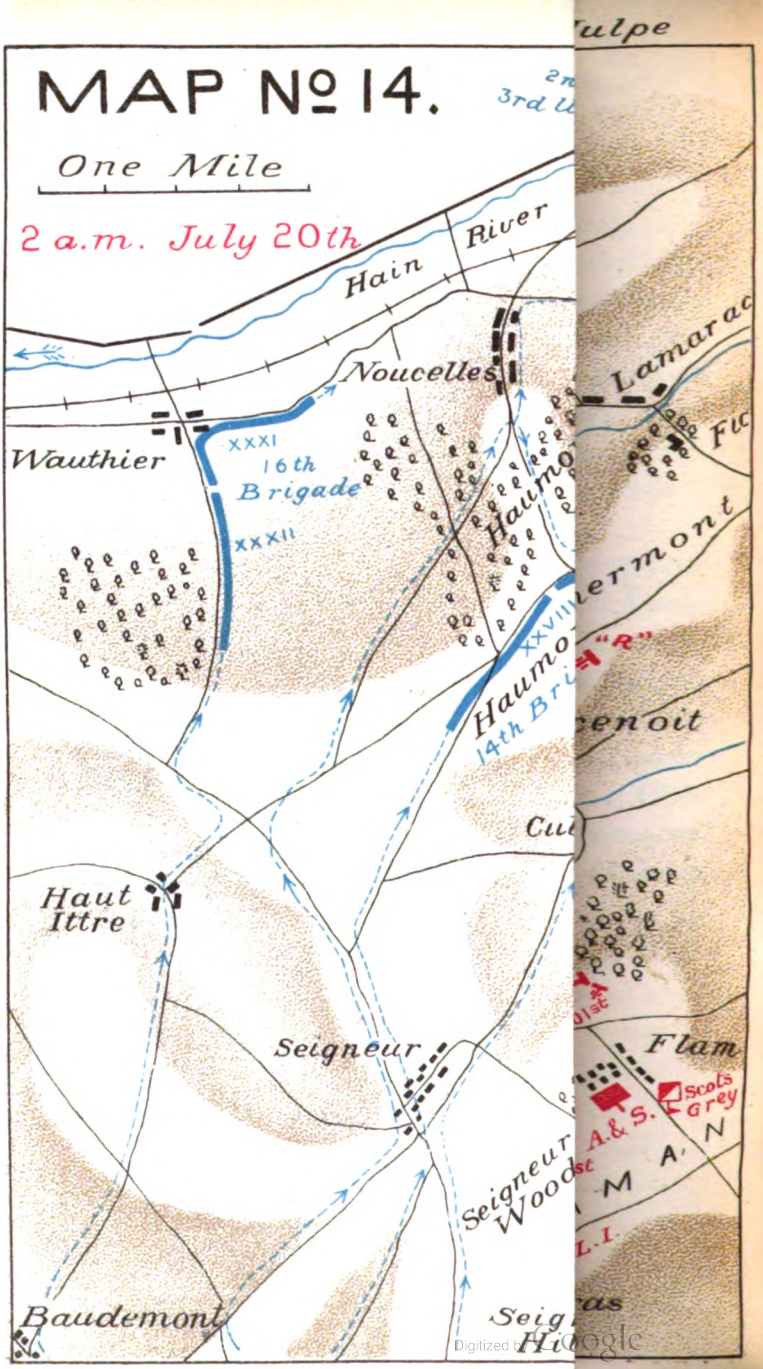
MAP No 14.
One Mile
2 a.m. July 20th
Hain River
Noucelles
Wauthier
XXXI
16th Brigade
XXXII
Haumont
XXVIII
14th Bri
"R"
Haut Ittre
Seigneur
Seigneur Wood
Baudemont
Lamarac
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ermont
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Scots Grey
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CHAPTER XXIX.

A DAY OF COMPARATIVE PEACE.

(A brief account of the movements of the British and German armies on the 19th of July, the day after the battles at Hutte Wood and Bruyère.)

THE Germans spend the 19th of July in carrying out Prince Lebenfeld's orders, which you read in the last chapter.

From sunrise until sunset the whole of the artillery maintains a steady bombardment of the British defences. The infantry regiments of the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps intrench themselves in an irregular, broken line between Etienne on the right and Newcourt Wood on the left. In fact, they take up a defensive position in much the same way as the British army corps has done. Each brigade is given a certain portion of the line to defend, and spends the day chiefly in fortifying villages, farms, and woods, with the aid of the field pioneers.

Three feint attacks are made against the front of the British position—at Bruyère, Glabais, and Mousty. These generally consist of the sudden opening of a heavy rifle fire, followed by the advance of a certain number of troops.

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When the British come out of their "splinter-proofs" and man their trenches, the advance ceases. By this means the Germans succeed in retaining the attention of their adversaries throughout the day, and keep them on the alert in expectation of a powerful attack.

While the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps are thus occupied, the German cavalry divisions are engaged in clearing the way for the night march of the 4th Army Corps. Screens of patrols sweep across the country, and remove the inhabitants of all the villages and houses on the roads by which the march is to be made. Staff officers from the brigades and divisions of the army corps, and at least one officer from every battalion, reconnoitre the ground over which they will have to advance during the night. They make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the positions of all the rivers, roads, villages, and farmhouses. Men are posted at the crossroads, and at any other places where the troops might lose their way by taking a wrong turning in the dark. It is a difficult matter moving large masses of men by night; hence these precautions.

The British 1st Cavalry Brigade does not remain idle during the day. Scouts, reconnoitring patrols, and special patrols, varying in size from half a dozen men to a whole squadron, are continually sent out to discover what the enemy is doing. Constant skirmishes take place; but the German cavalry outnumber the British, and by the evening of the 19th none of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, except the 1st M.I. in Braine l'Alleud and a few stray scouts, are west of the Brussels–Nivelles railway.

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War balloons go up from the British lines during the day, and the sapper officers in them are able to render good service to the artillery—especially the 4·7's—by directing their fire on the enemy's batteries. They see nothing to make them suspect a flank attack from Noucelles, for the 4th Army Corps remains hidden in Nivelles while daylight lasts.

General French does not make any very important alterations along the front of his position, but he is uneasy about his right flank at Napoleon's Wood. The wood itself is fairly secure against assault, as the Royal West Kent Regiment has fortified it strongly. The position at Bruyère is also safe, thanks to the exertions of the sappers during the night, and also to the open ground lying in front of it, which has already, as you will remember, proved too exposed for the Germans to cross successfully.

An enemy marching through Mon Souhait, though, might succeed in getting round Napoleon's Wood, and sweeping along the rear of the position held by the West Kent, Grenadiers, and Buffs. So General French orders the engineers to prepare Maison Roi for defence, so that it can be occupied if necessary. He also orders the construction of a redoubt near the southern edge of Napoleon's Wood (*see Map 14*), just on the eastern slope of the ridge joining the wood to Bruyère, where it is concealed from the enemy, and therefore fairly safe from his artillery fire.

As a final precaution against an attack on this flank,

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the general directs the 1st Yorkshire and 2nd Lincolnshire Regiments to remain at Levant Farm as the "local reserve," in place of the Grenadiers and Buffs, who now form the firing line at Bruyère owing to the severe losses of the Coldstreams and Scots Guards.

As darkness settles over the countryside, the 4th German Army Corps leaves Nivelles, and marches steadily to the north by several roads, which are indicated on *Map 14*. The artillery is left behind temporarily, as the rumbling of the wheels might reach the ears of the British sentries and betray the march. No smoking or talking is permitted. Each brigade, guided by one of the officers who have been over the ground during the day, moves quietly by a separate road to its destination.

Map 14 shows the situation on the right flank of the British position at two o'clock in the morning of July 20th.

The 1st Cavalry Brigade is guarding the right of the army—one regiment, the 10th Hussars, forming a chain of outposts on the actual battlefield of Waterloo. The positions of the three squadrons of the 10th, and of the four troops of each squadron, are shown on the map. For instance, C Squadron is just to the north of Napoleon's Wood. Its 1st Troop (1/C) is behind Mon Souhait Farm, with three double vedettes * in the grounds around the farm. The 2nd Troop (2/C) is between Mon Souhait and the wood, with two double vedettes. The 3rd and 4th

* A vedette is a mounted sentry; a double vedette is two sentries posted together.

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Troops are on the road, about half a mile behind the vedettes.

The 1st Mounted Infantry is garrisoning Braine l'Alleud. The main body of the brigade, with the horse artillery guns of the whole army, is sleeping at Plancenoit.

The German vedettes are roughly all along the railway. In some cases, barely a quarter of a mile separates them from the opposing horsemen.

Behind the German cavalry, the 13th and 15th Brigades of the 4th Army Corps are advancing slowly along roads, lanes, and paths towards the positions occupied by the British cavalry. The 14th Brigade is marching to Ophain, where it will halt, and act as a local reserve; while the 16th is approaching Noucelles, where it will remain during the attack as a general reserve.

Speaking generally, the intention of the commander of the 4th Army Corps is to rush the opposing cavalry at dawn with his infantry, gain possession of the rolling plains of Waterloo, turn to the south, and march straight against the rear of his enemy's position. So far, his advance has been a complete success. Owing to the elaborate precautions taken during the day, not a single battalion has lost its way, nor has his adversary the remotest idea that 25,000 German infantrymen are assembling in heavy masses in the valley of the Hain.

By 2.30 a.m. the Germans are ready to strike. It is a pitch-black night. A fresh breeze, gradually decreasing in strength, blows from the east; occasional sharp showers

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of rain drive across the country; the Hussar vedettes on the historic battlefield pull their cloaks closer round their bodies, shivering despite the time of year, and peer vigilantly into the darkness.

The bloody twentieth-century Battle of Waterloo is about to begin.

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CHAPTER XXX.

THE FINAL BATTLE ON JULY THE TWENTIETH.

The Cavalry Fight at Hougoumont.

(The movements of the troops during the fight are shown on *Map 15.*)

"HALT! Who goes there?" And the sentry leans forward, every nerve in his body quivering, and peers into the inky blackness surrounding him. He could have sworn that he heard something moving in front of him; he holds his breath and listens intently.

But no; no one answers. No sound breaks the death-like stillness of the cold, raw July morning except the faint, swishing noise made by his comrade's feet in the long grass of the orchard as he returns to his side after one of his usual perambulations of twenty yards along the fence and back.

"What is it, Tom?" asks the latter in a low voice, as he rejoins him.

"I s'pose it's nothing," replies Tom. "I thought I heard something—sounded exactly like a lot of men marching; but I s'pose I was wrong."

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It is the chilly hour which precedes the dawn, and the two mounted infantrymen are doing duty as a "double sentry" on the western outskirts of Braine l'Alleud. (*See Map 14.*) They are posted just where a winding path runs out of an orchard towards the Hain River, on the other side of which, barely two hundred yards away, the vedettes of the German cavalry are stationed. One of the two sentries remains still, while the other continually walks quietly out to one side or the other for a short distance. About fifty yards to the right and left of them are other sentries; while a few yards behind lie the remainder of their group, four men waiting their turn to do "sentry-go."

A chain of double sentries, disposed in this manner, surrounds the whole village. Each post has a group of from six to twelve men stationed a short distance behind it on every road running out of Braine l'Alleud towards the enemy. They are arranged, in fact, as the Dublin Fusilier groups were when they were doing outpost duty at Hutte Wood. (*See page 347.*)

In the houses behind the sentries, the men of the 1st Battalion of Mounted Infantry are sleeping, fully dressed, with their rifles by their sides, ready to turn out at a moment's notice.

Five minutes later Tom grasps his comrade's arm.

"There it is again, Bill," he says. "Can you hear it?"

The two sentries listen. Suddenly the east wind slackens for a minute, and a faint, far-off noise falls on their ears—the sound of many feet tramping along a

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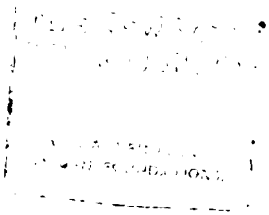

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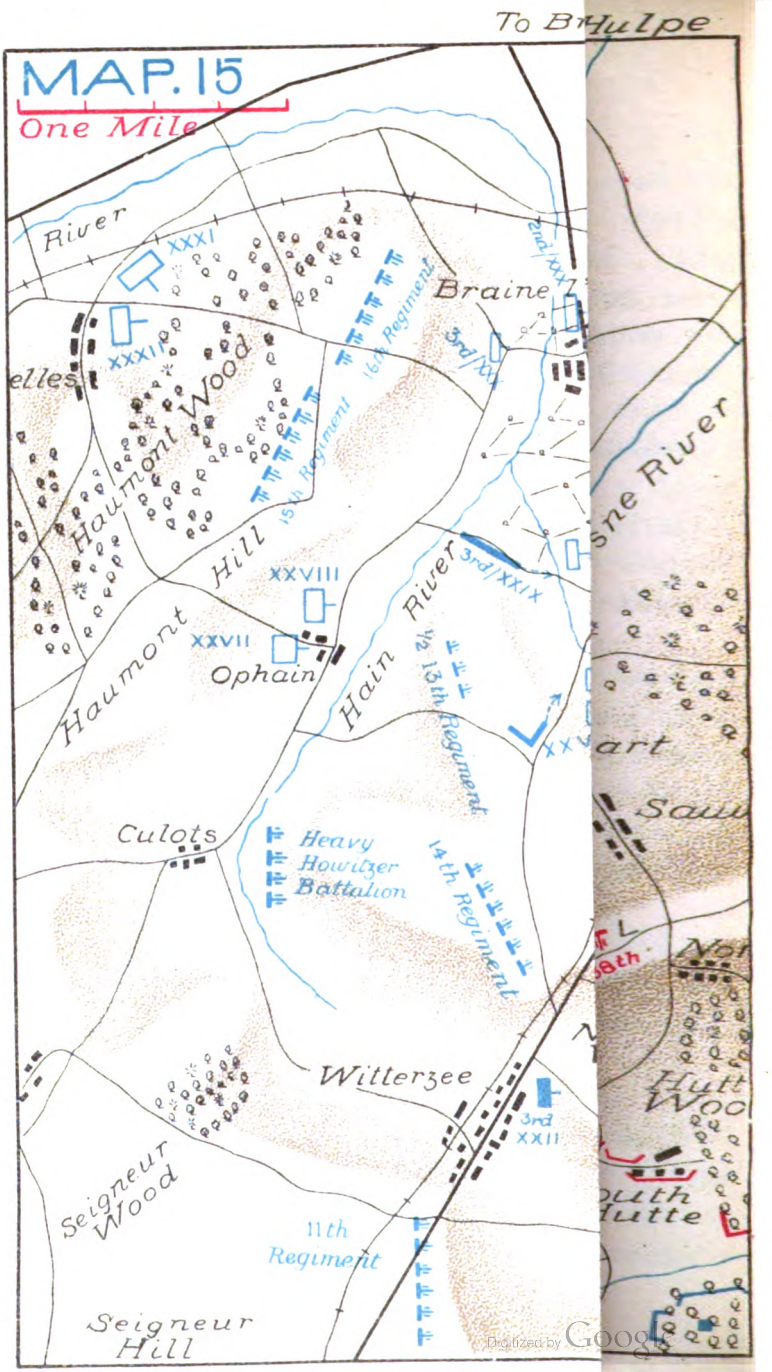
To Br Hulpe
MAP. 15
One Mile
River
XXXI
XXXII
Braine
2nd/XXXI
16th Regiment
3rd/XXX
elles
Haumont Wood
15th Regiment
Haumont Hill
XXVIII
XXVII
Ophain
Hain River
3rd/XXIX
½ 13th Regiment
sne River
art
Culots
Heavy Howitzer Battalion
14th Regiment
Witterzee
3rd XXII
Seigneur Wood
11th Regiment
Seigneur Hill
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hard road. Then the breeze blows again, and once more all is quiet.

At this moment a sergeant and two privates join the sentries.

"What is it, Smith?" asks the former of the man called Tom.

Smith tells him what he has heard, and the sergeant disappears along the path to the river, followed by his men. The three form a "reconnoitring patrol," and continually make little excursions during the night along the roads to the river and the outlying farms.

Presently they return.

"Keep a sharp look-out, Smith," he says, as he passes. "There certainly are a lot of men moving somewhere over in that direction to-night."

As the sergeant reaches the first houses of the village on his way to make his report to the officer of the outposts, he finds that the men are turning out into the street. In half an hour it will be light enough to see a man a hundred yards away; and as this is the time usually selected by an enemy for making a sudden attack, the mounted infantrymen are tumbling out of their quarters, to be at hand during the dangerous period.

As the faint gray shades of dawn slowly and imperceptibly lighten the sky, the sentries gradually see more and more of the ground in front of them, until finally the willow trees fringing the edge of the Hain River show dim and indistinct through the slight mist hanging over the intervening fields.

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"Ha! what is that?" and Private Smith catches his breath with sudden excitement, and strains his eyes in a keen endeavour to pierce the semi-obscurity. *Something* is moving out in front there—a gray, shadowy figure looms through the mist between him and the river, then another a little to the right of the first, then another, and—

Bang! goes Private Smith's rifle, and bang! bang! go other rifles almost simultaneously, as the sentries on either side of him give the alarm. Then there is a sound of hurrying, tramping feet, followed by a furious outburst of rifle fire, as the XXXth Regiment of German infantry comes into full view in the fast-increasing morning light, and dashes forward towards the village.

The sentries and their groups fall back rapidly behind the houses, where their comrades post themselves behind barricaded windows and loopholed walls, and give the enemy a warm reception.

For half an hour there is a spirited fight. The Germans pour into the gardens and orchards around the village, and make gallant efforts to get into the place itself, but are repulsed by the fire of the battalion. The two machine guns, placed so as to sweep the main roads leading towards the river, cause them severe loss. They creep nearer and nearer, however, to the line of houses which the British are defending, always in increasing numbers, and finally Colonel Trevor (commanding the 1st M.I.) sees that he is in a tight corner.

At this moment an orderly gallops in with a message

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from the 10th Hussars, saying that the enemy's cavalry are advancing in great strength from Menil. As this movement on the part of the Germans threatens to cut his battalion off from the rest of the army, Colonel Trevor at once orders a retreat.

In a few minutes the men of A Company are assembled outside the church, where they mount their horses, and gallop out of the village to Alleud Ridge. Arriving at the top, they dismount, and prepare to fire at any of the enemy who may endeavour to cut off the retreat of their comrades. (*See Map 15.*)

B, C, and D Companies then retire. Each company keeps up its fire to the last, makes a rush to the place where its horses are being held, mounts, gallops up the ridge past A Company, and makes for Hougoumont. Before the last company is out of the village, the enemy are swarming into it, and D loses several men and horses as it disappears over the ridge.

We must now leave the mounted infantry for a few minutes while we see what is happening to the remainder of the British outposts.

While the 1st M.I. are engaged with the enemy, the outposts of the 10th Hussars are steadily falling back on Hougoumont. When the Germans first appear, the 10th are arranged in the way shown on *Map 14.* The first men to give the alarm are those of C Squadron. The sentries in the orchard of Mon Souhait Farm are taken by surprise in the gray dawn by the rush of a mass of men belonging to the XXVth Regiment, which has gathered

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during the darkness in the railway cutting at the foot of the hill. They immediately fire their rifles, and gallop back to their respective troops, as they have been ordered to do. Nos. 1 and 2 Troops then retire and join the remainder of their squadron, which is about half a mile behind, so that by the time the Germans are in possession of Mon Souhait, the whole of C Squadron are gathered together on the road running past Hougoumont to Braine l'Alleud.

Map 15 shows the general state of affairs three-quarters of an hour after the first alarm is given.

It is now broad daylight—at least, you can "see a white horse a mile away," which is "broad daylight" in military language. The 12th Lancers and the 6th Dragoon Guards (the Carabiniers), and the horse artillery batteries, have just arrived near Hougoumont from Plancenoit.

A Squadron of the 10th Hussars (A/10th), and O and R Batteries, are near the Lion, about half-way between the famous old farm of La Haie Sainte and the Chateau of Hougoumont, which played such important parts in the great battle of 1815. The horse gunners are engaged in a duel with a couple of German batteries near Mont St. Jean, and the Hussars have sent out some scouts to watch the enemy towards the east.

In a hollow behind Hougoumont are the Lancers, their horses panting from their sharp gallop from Plancenoit, the men buttoning their coats and adjusting saddle-girths and belts; for the alarm has been so sudden that it left but little time for these details at the start. In the chateau itself is a company of cyclists.

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Just in front of historic Hougoumont are the troopers of B Squadron of the 10th Hussars (B/10th), dismounted, and firing at the advancing lines of the German 1st/XXIXth,* endeavouring to check their advance, so as to prevent them from cutting off the retreat of the 1st M.I. from Braine l'Alleud.

C Squadron of the 10th, and P and Q Batteries, are to the south of Hougoumont. From the rising ground on which they are posted, they are firing rapidly at a long line of infantry advancing from Mon Souhait Farm.

The Lincolnshire Regiment is just lining the walls and hedges on the north side of Maison Roi and at Rossom Farm; while the 1st Yorks is marching rapidly towards Plancenoit. By holding the two villages, these regiments are able to prevent the enemy from getting round the rear of the British troops in Napoleon's Wood and on the Bruyère position. The South Lancashire Regiment is marching up from Maransart to take the place of the Yorks and Lincolns as "local reserves."

It is at this moment that A Company of the Mounted Infantry dashes out of Braine l'Alleud, and halts on the ridge, as just narrated, to cover the retreat of their comrades. As the men dismount, there is a roar of artillery from the west, and the German batteries, galloping up from Nivelles, open a terrific shell fire on Alleud Ridge and the high ground extending between Mont St. Jean and Napoleon's Wood.

* 1st/XXIXth means the 1st Battalion of the XXIXth Regiment. You will remember that a German infantry regiment consists of three battalions, each of 1,000 men.

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Just as the remaining companies of mounted infantry move out of Braine l'Alleud, the 3rd Uhlans gallop up from Menil and pursue them; while another regiment, the 2nd Uhlans, dashes round the corner of Merbraine village and attempts to cut across their line of retreat.

Things look very bad for the mounted infantrymen. The men of A Company, who can only see the 3rd Uhlans from the position they are in, rapidly form a hollow square, with fixed bayonets, and rake the ranks of the advancing horsemen with magazine fire from their rifles. The Germans are shaken, but they still sweep on. Their horses, however, refuse to face the bristling fence of steel, and they recoil in confusion, suffering heavy losses from the rapid fire of the British. Part of the regiment rides round the square, and stampedes the horses of the mounted infantrymen in the valley. The latter are thus left without any means of retreating except their own feet. They retire steadily towards Hougoumont, still remaining in a square. Whenever the Germans attempt to repeat their charge, they halt, face outwards, and repulse them with rifle fire. The enemy's advance is thus checked, and the safety of the remainder of the mounted infantry is assured—as far as the 3rd Uhlans are concerned, at any rate.

It is from the 2nd Uhlans, though, that the greater danger threatens. There is no time for the mounted infantrymen to dismount to fire, or the pursuing cavalry behind and the advancing infantry on the right will be on them. Fortunately, the colonel of the Carabiniers sees their peril, and dashing down the valley towards Merbraine,

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his men charge the 2nd Uhlans at full speed. The regiments meet in a terrific shock, and are presently engaged in a furious hand-to-hand struggle, in which both lose heavily. (*This charge is shown on Map 15 by dotted lines.*)

Meanwhile the three companies of mounted infantry escape into Hougoumont, where they speedily man the walls of the ruined chateau, and prepare to assist the cyclists in covering the retreat of their rescuers. The latter are, however, in a bad way. They are outnumbered by the Uhlans, and it is only with the greatest difficulty that their officers can extricate them from the fight. When they finally assemble behind Hougoumont, they are barely two squadrons strong.

While the Carabiniers are thus successfully engaged in covering the retiring mounted infantry from the German cavalry, the position of the whole British army is seriously imperilled by an energetic attack delivered by the German infantry.

When the 1st Battalion of the XXVth Regiment rushes the piquets of C Squadron, 10th Hussars, near Mon Souhait at dawn, the latter, as before narrated, fall back to the neighbourhood of Hougoumont. (*See position of C Squadron on Map 15.*) The major places two of his troops, reduced by casualties to about twenty men each, in a sunken road about half a mile from the farm, and retires with their horses and the other two troops to a dip in the ground three hundred yards behind.

The Germans are not long in following the Hussars.

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Preceded by the usual cloud of skirmishers, the 1st/XXVth emerges from the valley behind Mon Souhait, and rapidly advances across the open fields in the attack formation with which you are now familiar—namely, in several long lines, with the men five or six yards apart. The dismounted troopers of C Squadron immediately open a steady fire on the enemy, in which they are soon joined by two companies of Lincolns stationed in a small redoubt behind Napoleon's Wood, and by P and Q Batteries, which gallop up from Plancenoit, unlimber near Hougoumont, and open fire on the Germans at a range of one mile. The Royal West Kent Regiment also lend a hand, and enfilade the enemy's ranks from the edge of their wood.

The men of the 1st/XXVth are fully exposed to view, as the ground over which they are moving is bare and open. They lose heavily, and eventually their advance is brought to a dead stop.

It is at this moment that the German artillery batteries come into action. They did not, as you will remember, accompany the infantry of the 4th Army Corps on its night march, for fear that the noise of the wheels would attract the attention of the British. Consequently, they have been absent during the earlier movements of the morning, and are only now arriving one by one on the field of battle. In a short time the scattered bodies of cavalry between La Haie Sainte and Napoleon's Wood are receiving a severe bombardment from the whole of the 4th Army Corps artillery. (*See positions of 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Artillery Regiments on Map 15.*)

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At first this fire has very little effect on the British. The dismounted Hussars of C Squadron are well concealed in their sunken road, and the Lincolns in the redoubt are screened from view by Napoleon's Wood. Presently, however, a battalion of heavy howitzers stationed in the valley of the Hain, near Culots, opens a heavy fire on the wood, and the 12th Artillery Regiment joins in from near Trou-du-Bois, with the result that the place becomes an inferno of bursting high-explosive shells, while the bullets from the shrapnel of the field batteries descend in showers through the trees. The men of the Royal West Kent are soon driven into their splinter-proof shelters by this terrific blast of lead and iron; and the Lincolns—the position of whose redoubt has now been discovered by the German scouts—also suffer severely, and are temporarily silenced.

The situation is now most serious for the British. Profiting by the almost complete cessation of the enfilade fire from their right, the 1st/XXVth Regiment presses forward towards Plancenoit, whither the 1st Yorks are also marching rapidly. It is of the greatest importance that the advance of the Germans should be delayed long enough to enable the British regiment to get into the village and make some rough arrangements for its defence.

The dismounted Hussars in the sunken road, and P and Q Batteries half a mile behind them, make a heroic attempt to stem the onrushing waves of the German attack with a rapid and continuous rifle and shrapnel fire. The gunners gradually become the object of such attention from the

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14th Artillery Regiment (*see Map 15*) that they lose heavily.

Suddenly the situation grows indeed desperate. Three batteries of the German 13th Regiment dash up to the edge of Newcourt Wood, unlimber, and open a heavy fire on the horse artillery. The majors of P and Q endeavour to change the positions of their guns, in order to obtain more cover. The skirmishers of the 1st/XXVth are now, however, only three-quarters of a mile away. A terrific rifle fire sweeps away drivers and horses when they come up to withdraw the guns. The attempt has finally to be abandoned, and the horse artillerymen remain in the open, calmly and methodically loading and firing, until the hail of lead to which they are exposed causes such heavy losses that their officers order them to take shelter in a hollow near the guns. Soon the batteries are silent and helpless, with the German infantry steadily sweeping towards them.

The 1st Battery of Field Artillery—the "Blazers," as it is known in the army—comes to the rescue. Major Rex, its commander, has for the last few minutes been busily employed in hunting for a suitable place from which his guns can get a good view of the XXVth Regiment, and yet not be exposed to the overwhelming fire of the numerous German batteries. He discovers a little knoll about half-way between Napoleon's Wood and Maison Roi which fulfils both the foregoing conditions, brings his battery up to it, and opens a rapid enfilade fire along the German lines at a range of about a mile. Assisted by the machine

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"The Blazers" repulsing the Attack of the 1st/XXVth Regiment.

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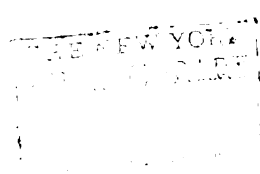

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gun of the Royal West Kent, he soon succeeds in stopping the advance of the XXVth's leading line.

Taking advantage of this, the dismounted Hussars of C Squadron retire along the sunken road into Rossom Farm. Another heroic attempt to withdraw the guns results in failure; for though the Germans are no longer advancing, their rifle fire is now most deadly.

The check to the enemy is, however, only temporary. A second line advances from Mon Souhait, joins the first, and carries it on with it; while some guns of the 13th Artillery Regiment, and a couple of companies of the 2nd/XXVth, turn their attention to the "Blazers." The latter are well concealed, thanks to the skill of their major, who has what is known as a "good eye for country." Consequently, they are very little damaged, and again succeed in stopping the Germans. A third line sweeps forward, joins the leading one, and carries it on, and the 1st/XXVth slowly approaches nearer and nearer to the deserted guns of P and Q Batteries.

The critical moment, however, has passed. Plancenoit is saved, thanks to the numerous checks given the Germans by P and Q Batteries to begin with, and then by the "Blazers." The men of the 1st Yorks are now in the village, lining walls and hedges, making loopholes, barricading windows and doors, and generally preparing to give the enemy a warm reception if he tries to take the place.

It looks bad for P and Q, though. The British cannot afford to lose two batteries; they have few enough guns as it is. So, evidently, thinks the colonel of the 12th

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Lancers; for his regiment suddenly swings out from the hollow behind Hougoumont, and sweeps down on the XXVth Regiment, whose leading line is now within seven hundred yards of the guns. (*It is in the position "a" "a" on Map 15.*)

"Cavalry going to charge straight at infantry! Why, it is impossible nowadays!" say you. "Have you not already told us that cavalry cannot do such a thing with success?"

No, they cannot, *unless* they manage to surprise the infantry. And this is just what the Lancers do. The German scouts have not been able to reconnoitre the hollow in which the 12th have been concealed, owing to the presence in Hougoumont of a company of cyclists, a strong party of whom is posted in some osier beds at the crossroads to the west of the chateau. (*Point "b" on Map 15.*) Consequently, the Germans of the XXVth Regiment are ignorant that five hundred British cavalry are within two minutes' gallop of the left of their line.

The charge is a complete success. The Germans, placed several yards apart, have not that moral courage which being in a line, shoulder to shoulder, confers on men. Besides that, the end of their line points towards the Lancers, with the result that their fire, though rapid and furious, is not nearly so deadly as if their line faced the enemy. The British, too, are gradually mounting the gentle slope leading out of the hollow; hence most of the bullets whistle harmlessly over the heads of the horsemen —the Germans fire too high. Here and there a man rolls

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out of the saddle or a horse comes plunging to the ground, making gaps in the line; but on the whole it is astonishing what little effect is produced by the hail of lead. The men of the XXVth gather into knots of half a dozen, with fixed bayonets: that is the only preparation to receive cavalry that they have time to make, for with a mighty cheer the 12th are on them, riding through and round them.

This is the period of the fight during which most damage is done to the British. But it does not last long, for the object of the Lancers is merely to create a diversion to attract the enemy's attention while the guns of P and Q are being withdrawn. This is quickly effected, though the horse gunners have to utilize some of the horses of the battery ammunition wagons at Plancenoit, so severely have the gun teams been handled in their previous attempts to take the guns out of action. As they gallop away now to take shelter behind Plancenoit, the trumpets of the 12th sound the "retire" long and strenuously. The Lancers instantly scatter and ride away as hard as they can, each man for himself, eventually reassembling behind the village, where they reorganize their ranks.

The charge of the 12th has been a gallant and daring performance, and many colonels would not have risked it. But by their action the Lancers have saved twelve valuable guns from falling into the hands of the Germans; and though they have lost over one hundred men in killed and wounded, the achievement has been worth the sacrifice. The losses would have been much greater but for the brief

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duration of the fight, the whole affair lasting less than fifteen minutes from first to last.

Shortly after this brilliant charge, which occurred, by the way, at the same moment as that of the Carabiniers, some scouts of the 10th Hussars bring General Douglas word that several regiments of German cavalry are assembling near Mont St. Jean. A few minutes later the general receives more information, this time from a lieutenant in the Sappers, who is up in a captive balloon 1,000 feet above Maransart. The subaltern reports that large masses of the enemy's infantry are pouring into Braine l'Alleud, and that his batteries on Haumont Hill are limbering up one by one and galloping off towards Mont St. Jean.

This looks as if the German commander was meditating an advance from the last-named place; so General Douglas at once decides to withdraw from Hougoumont to Fichermont Chateau, where he will be able to prevent the enemy's horsemen from attacking the British army in rear.

The movement is carried out in a masterly manner. The 1st M.I. is the first to leave. Moving out of Hougoumont, the battalion proceeds at a smart trot towards Fichermont, along the route shown by dotted lines on *Map 15*. It is quickly followed by the cyclists. When the mounted infantry are half-way along the low ridge running from Plancenoit towards Fichermont (*Fichermont Hill on Map 15*), Colonel Trevor sees a large body of the enemy's horsemen descending the hill near Mont St.

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Jean and moving rapidly towards the chateau, evidently with the intention of taking possession of it. He immediately orders his men to gallop. An exciting race ensues; it is a toss up who gets there first, British or Germans.

The 1st M.I. wins. Galloping into the grounds of the chateau, the men dismount, send their horses back over the ridge, and open a sharp fire on the enemy when he tries to cross the Smohain brook. The Germans are checked, and fall back into Lamarache, and the cyclists advance and join the mounted infantrymen.

Soon afterwards the horse artillery batteries, retiring from Hougoumont, come into action on Fichermont Hill, and engage in a spirited duel with the German batteries on Mont St. Jean Hill, about one and a quarter miles away across the valley of the Smohain. The Carabiniers, Lancers, and Hussars follow one by one, until finally the rival cavalry are in the positions in which they are shown on *Map 16.*

It is now past 5 a.m. The 4th German Army Corps is in complete possession of the historic old battlefield of Waterloo, and is preparing to launch a fresh attack—this time against the British infantry.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FINAL BATTLE.

(*Continued.*)

The First Attack on Plancenoit.

(The movements of the German and British troops are shown by dotted lines on *Map 16.*)

WHILE the 1st Cavalry Brigade is gradually retiring from Hougoumont, dense masses of German infantry are pouring into Braine l'Alleud. The roads in the valley of the Hain River are packed with long columns of men, horses, guns, and ammunition wagons.

The heavy howitzer battalion near Culots (*Map 16*), and the batteries of the 12th Artillery Regiment at Witterzee, still keep up their bombardment of Napoleon's Wood. The distant sound of heavy, uninterrupted rifle and artillery fire in the direction of Mousty, Glabais, and Bruyère shows that the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps are attacking the front of the British position. But just at present the German batteries in the neighbourhood of the Hain are silent; for they are moving from the positions they occupied during the early stages of the fight to

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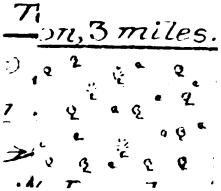

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others, from which they can bring a more effective fire to bear on the British.

While the German infantry and artillery are getting into position for delivering a grand attack, the cavalry are trying to find out exactly where the British have stationed themselves near Maison Roi and Plancenoit. As soon as the 1st Cavalry Brigade retires, the German scouts press forward towards the two villages. This advance is soon checked by the fire of the Lincolns and 1st Yorks, and in a short time the scouts send back word to their commander that both villages are strongly held by the British.

On receiving this intelligence, the general of the 4th Army Corps directs his artillery to bombard both places, and also Napoleon's Wood, from the north, in order to prepare the way for a general attack by his infantry.

At 7 a.m., the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Artillery Regiments open fire from the positions in which they are shown on *Map 16*, and presently no less than 180 field-guns and 24 heavy howitzers are sending streams of bursting shells towards Napoleon's Wood, Maison Roi, and Plancenoit.*

The first-named place suffers the most of the three, since, standing on a hill, it forms a conspicuous target for the enemy's artillerymen. Maison Roi and Plancenoit, on the other hand, are well concealed from their view, owing to the fact that both of them lie in the valley of the

* These numbers include the 12th Artillery Regiment and the battalion of heavy howitzers just mentioned.

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Lasne. The German gunners have to fire more or less at random, on the off-chance of hitting something vulnerable. Hence, although many shells fall in the villages, the effect of the enemy's fire is, on the whole, comparatively small.

It is not long before the British artillery replies to the German guns. As already stated, a captive balloon is floating above Maransart. The engineer officer in it has been carefully watching the German batteries since sunrise, and reporting their movements through his telephone to the general. As soon as it becomes evident that the enemy intends to assemble his guns between Braine l'Alleud and Mont St. Jean, immediate steps are taken by the British artillery to meet an attack from that direction. The 100th and 101st Batteries are dispersed along Flamandes Hill, as shown on *Map 16*, and when the German artillery regiments come into action they are received with a steady shell fire from the 4·7's at a range of from three to four miles. This fire is directed by artillery officers stationed on Fichermont Hill, and its effect is also observed and telephoned to the officer in command of the heavy batteries by the R.E. officer in the balloon. Consequently, the 4·7's are able to make very good practice on the German artillery regiments, especially on the 14th, 15th, and 16th, causing severe losses to the gunners with shrapnel, wrecking several guns with high-explosive shells, and continually forcing the batteries to change their positions.

The Germans make every effort to conceal their guns

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from view; but it is always very difficult to find a position big enough to conceal even one battery. As the German guns are massed in long lines, each containing six batteries, the attempts made to conceal them are, on the whole, unsuccessful. The British guns, on the other hand, are invisible to the Germans, owing to the fact that they have been placed at wide intervals apart, which has given the subaltern in charge of each 4·7 a large piece of ground on which to find some natural screen, such as a bank, hedge, or wood, for hiding his gun.

Two 4·7's of the 101st Battery, stationed near Flamandes, and directed by an officer in Napoleon's Wood, devote themselves in a similar manner to the German 12th Artillery Regiment near Witterzee, at a range of over three miles.

While the German artillery is shelling the British position, the infantry of the 4th Army Corps is gradually assembling in the neighbourhood of Hougoumont. This army corps consists of the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Brigades, each of 6,000 men

The general in command orders the 13th Brigade (XXVth and XXVIth Regiments), at Mon Souhait Farm, to attack Napoleon's Wood and the redoubt to its east; the 15th Brigade (XXIXth and XXXth Regiments) to attack Maison Roi from Hougoumont; and the 16th Brigade (XXXIst and XXXIInd Regiments) to attack Plancenoit from La Haie Sainte. The 14th Brigade is kept as a general reserve at Ophain.

Map 16 shows the way the attack, which is started at

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eight o'clock, is carried out. As the three brigades meet with varying fortune, let us follow first of all the attack of the 16th on Plancenoit.

Plancenoit is, as you know, defended by the 1st Yorkshire Regiment. Four companies form the garrison of the village itself. The time which has elapsed since their arrival has been profitably spent by the Yorkshiremen in assisting the sappers of the 5th Field Company, R.E., in fortifying the houses. Indeed, the work of preparing the village for defence is still proceeding merrily, in spite of the enemy's shells.

The remaining four companies of the battalion are lining a sunken lane on the top of the hill to the north of Plancenoit. The major commanding them has ordered his men to lie down and not expose themselves to view. Hence the German gunners are ignorant of their position, and they suffer no losses beyond those received from an occasional stray shell. A dozen skilled marksmen have crawled along a ditch to the far side of the hill, where, lying concealed in a root field, they pick off the enemy's scouts, and prevent them from finding out that the sunken lane is occupied.

General Wahl, the commander of the 16th Brigade, posts himself on the rising ground near "the Lion" of Waterloo, where he can see over the whole of the gently undulating, open country which extends from Mont St. Jean to the position occupied by the Yorkshire Regiment on Fichermont Hill. He orders the XXXIInd Regiment to remain in reserve at Menil, and the XXXIst to attack Plancenoit.

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The right of its line is to move along the road from Mont St. Jean to Maison Roi.

To begin with, only the 1st Battalion of the XXXIst takes an active part in the fight. Its major sends forward a swarm of about fifty skirmishers, who, advancing in twos and threes at wide intervals, creep slowly towards the British without firing. These skirmishers make no attempt to move in a regular line. Before starting, some conspicuous object, such as a tree, or a mound, or a house, is pointed out to each man. He is then given orders to advance towards this point, and to signal back at once when he sees the enemy.

The German infantrymen are by this time fairly proficient in the art of skirmishing, thanks to the fighting of the last three weeks. Consequently, they succeed in crawling up almost unobserved to within five hundred yards of the British. Here and there a man shows himself, and pays the penalty by being knocked over by some invisible foe; for the crack shots of the Yorks are on the lookout for such opportunities. The Yorkshire's scouts are soon driven in, and by nine o'clock the skirmishers of the XXXIst are in the position shown on *Map 16.*

They can now advance no further, owing to the shells from their own batteries. Lying flat on the ground, they fire whenever they catch a glimpse of the enemy in front of them. They also signal "All clear" to other men who have been following three or four hundred yards behind them, and these in turn pass the message on to the colonel of the XXXIst at La Haie Sainte.

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The colonel now orders his 1st Battalion to advance, join the skirmishing line, and then open a heavy fire on the British. Under cover of this fire he intends to send forward his 2nd and 3rd Battalions to join the 1st, and eventually to charge the enemy's position with fixed bayonets.

The major of the 1st Battalion sends forward a long line of men, several yards apart, composed of a section from each of his four companies. When this line has advanced about a quarter of a mile, a similar one issues from La Haie Sainte and follows it.

Up till now the four batteries of British horse artillery have been firing at the German horse batteries from Fichermont Hill, on the east side of the road leading to Sauvagemont. Just as the leading line of the 1st/XXXIst is about half-way across the Smohain Valley, P and Q Batteries limber up, dash across the road, unlimber under cover of the trees around the chateau, and shell the advancing infantry with great violence. (*Map 16.*) The effect of this enfilade fire is so great that the German line stops; but presently the second catches up with it and carries it forward again, while some of the XXXIst's skirmishers face round and open fire on the batteries. They are too few in number, however, to have much effect, and again the shells of the 12-pounders deal out death along the German line, and stop its advance.

The major of the 1st/XXXIst immediately sends forward the remainder of his battalion from La Haie Sainte. As Brigadier-General Hirst, commanding the 1st Cavalry

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Brigade, sees this reinforcement hurrying up from the orchards around the farm, he scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, and hands it to his A.D.C. with a curt remark. The latter gallops down the road to where the brigade is drawn up behind Fichermont Hill, reins up beside the colonel of the 10th Hussars, and gives him the note.

A minute later the 10th are cantering up the valley: the dotted line on *Map 16* shows their advance. The Lancers follow, and halt behind the hill at "*a*;" but the Hussars swing up the gentle slope, sweep over the top, set spurs to their horses, and gallop down into the Smohain Valley at full speed. The assault is delivered straight against the end of the German line, and is so sudden and unexpected that it is completely taken by surprise. Before the scattered infantrymen have time to rally into groups the Hussars are in their midst, slashing with their swords and firing their revolvers. The rout is complete. Neither the German infantry behind nor the German artillery dare fire on the mixed mass of friend and foe. The 10th doubles up the enemy's line, scatters it in full flight, and then, the trumpets sounding the "retire," turns and canters back over the ridge, pursued by a storm of shrapnel shells from the whole of the 16th Artillery Regiment.

Meanwhile the German Uhlan Brigade, having observed the Hussars' charge, is galloping down the sides of the valley from Haie Ridge, with the intention of cutting off the retreat of the audacious British regiment. But it is

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checked and thrown into confusion by the Smohain—a mere brook here, though large enough to be a formidable obstacle to a cavalry charge—and while in this state are raked by rapid rifle and machine-gun fire from the 1st M.I. in the grounds of Fichermont Chateau. The Uhlans eventually retire, leaving over two hundred men and horses on the ground.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FINAL BATTLE.

(*Continued.*)

The Defence of Fichermont Chateau by the Mounted Infantry.

(See Map 16.)

SO far, the attack of the XXXIst Regiment has failed. It is evident to the commander of the 16th Brigade that Fichermont must be captured, or at least silenced, before he can carry Plancenoit.

His cavalry scouts have just reported the arrival of a large body of the enemy at Ohain, about two miles to the north-east of the chateau. This, as a matter of fact, is a force of 6,000 Belgians, mostly recruits, badly trained and ill-armed, who have been suddenly thrown into the village by Lord Kitchener to guard the railway from Brussels, which carries the British food supply. The German commander does not know the quality of these troops, but their mere presence at Ohain deters him from sending any infantry in that direction in order to attack the chateau from the east.

He therefore sends an order to the colonel of his other regiment, the XXXIInd, to advance from Menil through

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Mont St. Jean, and attack Fichermont from the north. A second order goes to the commander of the three howitzer batteries of the 16th Artillery Regiment* to bombard the chateau vigorously; and a third order to the colonel of the XXXIst to renew his assault on Plancenoit when the XXXIInd is ready to attack Fichermont.

Meanwhile the mounted infantry and cyclists at Fichermont are busily employed in making their position as secure against assault as possible. The chateau which they are holding lies in a large park surrounded by a high, thick stone wall, which the British make their chief line of defence. They extend two companies along it, and knock loopholes in it at intervals to fire through. Several openings are also made for the machine guns, so that they can be brought into action at any part of the wall that the enemy attacks.

They also fortify the chateau—a strong stone building—by barricading the doors and windows; and, since it is screened by tall trees from the enemy's view, the officers of the 16th Artillery Regiment are unable to direct the fire of their howitzers against it with any great success. They are therefore obliged to bombard the whole of the park, on the off-chance of their projectiles doing some harm to the British. They succeed in making it a very dangerous place to stay in; high-explosive and shrapnel shells continually burst among the trees, and several damage the buildings to a certain extent.

* The 16th Artillery Regiment is composed of three batteries armed with field-guns, and three armed with light field howitzers, corresponding to those of the British 37th Battery.

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By eleven o'clock the XXXIInd Regiment is assembled near Mont St. Jean, behind Haie Ridge. (*See Map 16.*) The leading company of the 1st Battalion then advances rapidly over the ridge, where it is shelled by the British horse artillery, descends into the valley of the Smohain, and takes shelter behind the buildings and orchards of Lamarache and some farms around it. The other companies follow in succession, and by midday both the 1st and 2nd Battalions—2,000 men—are gathered behind the village, while their scouts creep forward and endeavour to find out where the British are posted.

The combatants are now only a quarter of a mile apart, separated by the little brook called the Smohain. The ground between the village and the brook is dotted with trees and intersected with deep ditches and low banks; but between the brook and the park wall is a strip of bare land about fifty yards wide.

Presently the howitzers shift their fire away from Fichermont, and the German infantry advances. Creeping up ditches, crouching behind banks, and darting from tree to tree, the 1st/XXXIInd succeeds in reaching the brook with comparatively little loss. Here, however, its advance is stopped by the steady, accurate fire of the British, who are completely concealed by their wall.

The Germans get into the bed of the stream, which is scarcely three feet deep, line the banks, and fire into the loopholes in the wall fifty yards ahead of them. Two companies make an attempt to get round the rear of the chateau by way of Fichermont Hill, but are checked by

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the fire of two cavalry machine guns and the rifles of a dismounted squadron of the Carabiniers.

Shortly afterwards a company of the 2nd/XXXIInd makes a gallant effort to carry the wall by assault. After pouring a deadly fire into the loopholes, the men climb out of the bed of the stream, and dash boldly across the narrow open strip of turf. A withering fire greets them, and although some manage to reach the wall, and lie crouched at its foot, the majority are driven back into the brook. Several similar attempts meet with failure; the Germans refuse to face the terrific fire which their every appearance calls forth from the mounted infantrymen and cyclists and their machine guns.

At half-past one the XXXIInd retires behind Lamarache again, and the howitzer batteries at Mont St. Jean reopen fire on Fichermont. This time an artillery major stations himself near the village, so that he can see the wall which has proved such a stumbling-block to the infantry. Although the gunners working the howitzers cannot themselves see the wall, the major manages to direct their fire by signals so well that in an hour's time he succeeds in levelling several yards of it.

The colonel of the XXXIInd now determines to make another assault. A signal is made to the artillery to stop firing, and the 1st Battalion once more advances to the brook, where they line the banks as before. Again a deadly fire is directed against the loopholes, and also against the breach in the wall. Under cover of this fire, five hundred men of the 2nd Battalion move up from

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Lamarache, dash across the brook, and charge the breach.

In the meantime, however, the British have received a welcome reinforcement in the shape of the 2nd M.I., which General French finds that he can spare from Hutte Wood, and sends to the assistance of his hard-pressed men. Consequently, when the enemy pour through the breach, they are received by a concentrated fire from two hundred rifles and no less than four machine guns, placed behind barricades of felled trees about one hundred yards from the wall.

The slaughter is terrible. The deadly stream of bullets converts the breach into a shambles. Many of the Germans throw themselves flat on their faces to escape the storm of lead; but the majority of the survivors turn and fly, leaving the ground piled thick with corpses.

This is the last attempt made to take the chateau. The XXXIInd retires to Lamarache, and for the remainder of the day the howitzers shell Fichermont intermittently.

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CHAPTER XXXIII

THE FINAL BATTLE.

(*Continued.*)

The Second Attack on Plancenoit.

(See Map 16.)

WHILE the fight just described has been raging around Fichermont Chateau, the XXXIst has renewed its attack on the 1st Yorkshire Regiment at Plancenoit.

Preceded, as before, by a cloud of skirmishers, the companies of the 2nd Battalion advance in a succession of lines from La Haie Sainte, across the same ground over which their comrades in the 1st Battalion made their attack earlier in the day, and which is now strewn with the bodies of the men who perished under the swords and revolvers of the 13th Hussars. The Germans are severely shelled by the guns of P and Q Batteries while they are crossing the valley of the Smohain. They lose heavily, and the men naturally are greatly discouraged by the sight of the corpses which meets their eyes on all sides. On several occasions the officers need all their powers of persuasion to get their companies to advance at all; and many of them are killed

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by the sharpshooters of the 1st Yorks, who have crept forward to the north side of Fichermont Hill, and, concealed in a ditch, are firing deliberately and continuously at the Germans. Consequently, the advance of the XXXIst is somewhat slow, and it is past one o'clock before the skirmishers of the 2nd Battalion push back the British scouts, and establish themselves within a quarter of a mile of the road occupied by the 1st Yorks. The remaining companies come up one by one, gradually pushing forward their skirmishers, until finally the whole of the 2nd Battalion arrives within three hundred and fifty yards of the Yorkshiremen.

The men of the 2nd/XXXIst are now lying in a line over half a mile long on the northern slope of Fichermont Hill (where the skirmishers are shown on *Map 16*); while the 1st Yorks is stationed, as you know, on the top of the hill, just where it begins to fall away towards Plancenoit. The intervening space is swept by a heavy rifle fire from the German infantry, and by a storm of shrapnel bullets from the three field batteries of the 16th Artillery Regiment. The Yorkshiremen lie in the bottom of their sunken road without firing, only a few officers and sentries peering over the edge of the bank, ready to give the alarm when the Germans continue their advance.

Presently the 3rd/XXXIst sweeps out of La Haie Sainte, and crosses the Smohain Valley to join the battalion on the hill. It suffers less during its advance than the latter did, for about fifty sharpshooters of the 2nd Battalion have crawled towards Fichermont, and are causing heavy loss to P and Q Batteries. The latter is already short-handed

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after its exertions earlier in the day—in fact, the guns are being worked chiefly by volunteers from the 12th Lancers—and both batteries are soon silenced by the German marksmen, who have concealed themselves so well in ditches and behind banks as to be invisible to the British gunners. The latter lie down in small trenches which they have hastily dug during the interval between the two attacks.

The commander of the 16th Artillery Regiment has been watching the progress of the attack from the mound of "the Lion." When he sees the 3rd/XXXIst join the 2nd, he orders his batteries to cease firing at that part of Fichermont Hill which he has been told is occupied by the 1st Yorks, and to concentrate their fire further along the ridge, to prevent the British cavalry from renewing their tactics of the morning.

As the shells suddenly cease falling over the ground in front of them, the buglers of the XXXIst sound the advance. Four companies remain lying on the ground to fire at the British, while the other four, led by their captains, charge towards their enemy with fixed bayonets.

The Yorkshiremen rise from their sunken road, open their magazines, and fire a succession of steady, well-aimed volleys into the advancing mass. They lose heavily from the fire of the Germans who are still lying down; but they stick to their post, and bring the attacking line to a halt when the latter is still two hundred and fifty yards away. The XXXIst throw themselves on the ground and open an answering fusillade, while the companies in rear make a series of rushes, and gradually close up with them.

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At this moment a scout farther along the hill waves his arm to some cavalrymen in the valley behind. They gallop up with the machine guns of the Carabiniers, 12th Lancers, and 10th Hussars, fling themselves off their horses, swing the Maxims round, and pour a devastating torrent of bullets along the German lines. (*Point "b" on Map 16.*)

Raked from end to end by this terrific enfilade fire, withered by the volleys of the infantrymen in front, the XXXIst wavers, halts, and finally turns and flies in disorder. Then there rises a terrible cry of "Cavalry! the cavalry!" drowned by a ringing British cheer, and the next moment the Scots Greys and Inniskillings dash out from behind the Yorkshiremen and gallop into the midst of the disorganized mass of fugitives, thrusting and slashing right and left.

All is over in a very few minutes, so complete is the surprise. The valley of the Smohain is dotted with the figures of the flying Germans. Some of the Inniskillings carry their pursuit too far, and a whole squadron is cut off by two German Uhlan regiments from Haie Ridge; but the remainder retire after their successful charge, with very few casualties, behind Fichermont Hill.

Once again the value of a sudden and unexpected charge by well-trained cavalry has been proved. For the second time to-day the retirement of the German foot soldiers, after they have been severely shaken by rifle and machine-gun fire, has been converted into a rout by the swords and lances of the British horsemen.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FINAL BATTLE.

(*Continued.*)

The Fight at Rossom Farm.

(See Map 16.)

WHILE the 16th Brigade is making its vigorous but unsuccessful attacks against Plancenoit and Fichermont, the 15th is engaged in a sanguinary struggle at Maison Roi.

This place is defended by the 2nd Lincolnshire Regiment, and is, as you know, strongly fortified, thanks to the exertions of the 5th Field Company yesterday. The village itself, as you can see from *Map 16*, lies in a valley. Consequently, although it is protected from the direct and accurate fire of the enemy's artillery, its defenders are unable to see the ground over which the Germans must advance to attack it.

To do away with this disadvantage, three companies of the Lincolns are sent to Rossom Farm, about six hundred yards to the north of the village. Fifty men of A Company garrison the farmhouse, while the remainder, with B and C Companies, line some high banks surmounted with

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thick hedges, which bound an orchard and osier-field close to the farm-buildings. Behind these banks the sappers have constructed splinter-proofs by digging deep trenches in the ground, and roofing them over with boards torn from a wooden outhouse and covered with earth. These protect the Lincolns from the enemy's shrapnel bullets while the latter's artillery is bombarding them.

D and E Companies are garrisoning the stone church and several of the more strongly-built houses in the village. The walls have been loopholed for firing through, and the windows and doors blocked with bags of earth and planks. F Company is in reserve on the southern edge of Maison Roi, while G and H are manning the redoubt half a mile to the west.

The enemy's artillery, as already narrated in Chapter XXXI., opens fire at seven o'clock, the 15th Regiment devoting itself to bombarding Rossom Farm and Maison Roi. At 7.30 the brigadier orders one of his regiments, the XXIXth, to advance to the attack; and the other, the XXXth, to remain in reserve at Merbraine.

At 8 a.m. the XXIXth, which is assembled at Hougoumont, starts its attack. The major of the 1st Battalion sends forward a line of skirmishers to try to find out the exact position of the British who are in the neighbourhood of Rossom Farm. These skirmishers, about fifty in number, have to advance under the greatest difficulties, for the country between Hougoumont and Rossom is absolutely open. In two or three places there are hollows in the ground large enough to conceal from a dozen to twenty

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men from view, otherwise there is practically no cover to hide the advancing Germans. Even the wheat in the fields has either been harvested, or is trampled down by the cavalry action which has just been fought over them.

The skirmishers lose heavily from the fire of the Lincolns' marksmen at Rossom, and advance very slowly. Indeed, that they are able to move forward at all is due to the fact that the shells from the thirty-six guns of the 15th Artillery Regiment keep the British very quiet. The Lincolnshire officers follow the usual practice of making their men stay in the splinter-proof trenches while the enemy's bombardment is going on, only a few of the best shots being allowed to line the parapets and fire at the Germans.

By nine o'clock the skirmishers of the 1st/XXIXth have only succeeded in getting as far as a lane about half a mile from Rossom (the position in which they are shown on *Map 16*). Three men, however, manage to creep along the ditch which bounds the road from Maison Roi to Braine l'Alleud, to within about five hundred yards of the hedge behind which the Lincolns are intrenched. From here they are able to see better where the British are stationed, and one of them creeps back with the information to their major. The latter informs the commander of the 15th Artillery Regiment, with the result that the German fire becomes far more accurate. Shrapnel shells burst in the air in front of the hedge, and rain down bullets with such intensity on the Lincolns that eventually the rifle fire of

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their marksmen is entirely subdued, and the men lie crouched in their trenches.

The artillery commander also receives information from other sources as to the position of his enemy. Shortly after the attack starts, a war-balloon goes up from Braine l'Alleud. So soon as the British see it, they open a continuous fire on it from two pom-poms, which, originally stationed near the Highland Brigade, are now sent into the valley behind Maison Roi. Over three hours elapse before they succeed in hitting the balloon a sufficient number of times to allow the gas to escape; it then settles quietly down to the earth. In the meantime, however, the balloon officer is able to tell the general of the 4th Army Corps where many of the British regiments are stationed.

At 10.30 a.m. a company of the 1st/XXIXth emerges from the sheltered ground around Hougoumont, and attempts to advance across the open in extended order, the men a wider distance apart than usual. When this company reaches its skirmishers in the lane, the Lincolns are called out of their splinter-proofs, and endeavour to stop the advance with a steady rifle fire. They succeed, but only temporarily; for they lose heavily from the German artillery fire, and are soon driven into their splinter-proof trenches again.

Another company issues from Hougoumont, joins the first, and both advance about a hundred yards. Again they are stopped, this time by a destructive shrapnel fire from the 1st Field Battery behind a corner of Napoleon's

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Wood. But a third company advances, strikes the attacking line from behind, and carries it forward another hundred yards. Some German scouts, concealed in a ditch, eventually discover the position of the battery, and open fire on it at 1,500 yards range. They kill and wound over a score of gunners in less than ten minutes; but the "Blazers" stand their ground nobly, and cause the enemy considerable loss. Finally, they lose so many of their number that the major orders the battery to scatter, and each subaltern or sergeant in charge of a gun to choose a position for himself somewhere between Napoleon's Wood and Plancenoit. He gives this order because it is much easier to find a place where you can conceal a single gun than one in which you can hide a whole battery.

While this movement is being executed, the last company of the 1st/XXIXth advances from Hougoumont and joins the others, carrying them forward to within four hundred yards of the Lincolns, when their further progress is stopped by the fire from their own 15th Artillery Regiment, which is devastating the British trenches.

The Germans, reduced to less than six hundred men after their passage across the shot-swept plain, lie down in an irregular line, and fire steadily on the hedge in front of them. One company makes an attempt to pass between Rossom Farm and Plancenoit, but is repulsed by the fire of the South Lancashire Regiment's machine gun, ingeniously concealed near the village.

What with the combined fire of the German artillery and the 1st/XXIXth, the Lincolns lose a great many men.

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Those lying in the splinter-proofs are well protected, but some of the officers and men are obliged to stay outside in the trenches and watch the Germans, in order to give the alarm when they advance. These are constantly being hit, and have to be replaced. Rossom Farmhouse is repeatedly struck by shells, and is eventually reduced to a heap of burning ruins, its garrison being compelled to evacuate it and join the companies behind the hedge to the west.

Half an hour after midday, the 2nd/XXIXth issues from Hougoumont hollow, and advances across the plain in skirmishing order. Not a rifle fires a bullet at them, so overwhelmed are the British infantry by the bombardment that they are receiving. They meet with very rough treatment, though, from the British artillery. Both the 63rd and 73rd Batteries come into action at Bruyère against them, and shell them vigorously at a range of from two to two and a half miles. (*See Map 16.*) Two howitzers of the 37th, posted in the valley behind Maison Roi, fling their high-explosives over the houses of the village, and these terrible projectiles burst in clouds of flame and smoke before and behind the German lines. The guns of the 1st Field Battery, each working by itself, continually come into action at different places between Napoleon's Wood and Plancenoit, fire a few shots, and are then driven away by the enemy's riflemen, only to appear again in some fresh position.

All this time, remember, the shells of the 4·7's are hurtling through the air, over the heads of Britons and

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Germans, in their flight towards the latter's guns between Mont St. Jean and Braine l'Alleud.

The men of the 2nd/XXIXth lose heavily; some drop at every yard of advance. Finally, the British artillery fire proves too much for them, and they throw themselves on the ground when still a quarter-mile from the 1st Battalion.

The colonel of the XXIXth immediately orders forward his 3rd Battalion. It advances and joins the 2nd. Encouraged by this reinforcement, the latter rises, and both battalions sweep forward. As they approach the 1st, a rocket shoots into the air from Hougoumont, the German artillery ceases firing, and with bugles sounding and bayonets flashing, the men of the XXIXth advance at a run over the bare field, three hundred and fifty yards broad, which separates them from their enemy.

Whistles shriek along the Lincolns' trenches. Men leap to their feet with a shout of joy at having something to do at last, scramble out of the splinter-proofs, and line the parapets of the trenches. The battalion machine gun is run out of a pit and pointed through the hedge, and a blinding storm of bullets from Maxim and rifles bursts on the Germans.

Great gaps are torn in the advancing ranks. It is probable that if the XXIXth had continued their charge, they would have arrived at the trenches with sufficient men to have overpowered the Lincolns. But then, human nature has to be considered. Even the bravest of men cannot see their comrades being swept away by the score, cannot hear hundreds of bullets whistling past their

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ears—under their arms—knocking the dust up at their feet, without feeling discouraged. To face such a hail of lead as that poured forth by the Lincolns is a moral impossibility—for long, at any rate. And so the Germans find it. One hundred yards from the British trenches they fall flat on the ground, not even attempting to return their enemy's fire, the slightest movement producing a shower of bullets.

Three hundred men, led by a captain, make a gallant effort to turn the right of the Lincolns' position by advancing round the deserted, burning farmhouse (in the direction shown by a dotted line on *Map 16*). Half a company of the Lincolns, stationed in an orchard just on the top of the hill at the corner of Maison Roi, checks them with a heavy rifle fire. A gun of the 1st Field Battery, also stationed in the orchard, sweeps them away in tens and dozens with case-shot.* Finally, a solid line of drab-coated horsemen appears suddenly over the crest of the hill, barely three hundred yards away, and before the Germans have time to resist a cavalry charge, the 13th Hussars are riding through them at a mad gallop. The men making the little flank attack are practically wiped out.

But all is not over yet. The XXXth Regiment hurries up from Merbraine, and sends one thousand men—its 1st Battalion—from Hougoumont to assist the XXIXth. Their artillery, however, cannot help them now, for the German

* A thin metal cylinder holding two hundred round lead bullets, which bursts the moment it leaves the gun, and pours its contents out in a shower.

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gunners dare not fire for fear of hitting their own infantry lying prone on the ground in front of the British trenches. So the Lincolns, reinforced by F Company from the village, wither the advancing XXXth with a terrific rifle fire, until the Germans, sick at the sight of hundreds of their comrades' corpses littering the plain, absolutely refuse to move forward. They eventually retire into the shelter of Hougoumont, having lost over three hundred killed and wounded in the short hour during which they have been exposed to the British rifle fire.

The German brigadier now decides that it is a practical impossibility to carry Maison Roi—by daylight, at any rate. He sends a message to this effect to his army corps general, who agrees with his decision, and orders him to fortify Hougoumont, in case the British should make a counter-attack.

Meanwhile, the gallant but unfortunate XXIXth lies paralyzed under the close rifle fire of the Lincolns. Now and then a few brave men rise and make a desperate dash towards the trenches; but they are instantly shot down—a like fate befalling those who attempt to crawl away to the rear. There is not a scrap of cover behind which the Germans can take shelter. So long as they lie still, the British refrain from shooting them; but the moment a man moves or puts up his rifle to fire, a dozen bullets hit him—it is difficult to miss at one hundred yards range.

At five o'clock a German major holds up a white handkerchief. The British fire ceases, and an officer goes out and holds a brief conversation with the major, the upshot

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of which is that the survivors of the XXIXth lay down their arms. As they file dejectedly through the defenders' lines, the Lincolns see that there are barely five hundred of them, so dearly has the regiment, originally three thousand strong, paid for its gallant attack across open fields destitute of any form of cover.

Indeed, the losses in the fight around Rossom Farm are worth giving, as an example of the advantage possessed by a defending over an attacking force. The 300 Lincolnshire men, sheltered by trenches, have lost 97 of their number in killed and wounded, not counting many who have received slight wounds, but are still in their places in the firing line. The XXIXth Regiment, on the other hand, has been fully exposed to the view of the British while advancing over one mile of open country. Its casualty list shows 2,300 killed and wounded, and 500 prisoners, out of a total of close on 3,000, the remainder being returned as "missing."

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CHAPTER XXXV.

THE FINAL BATTLE.

(*Continued.*)

The Slaughter in Napoleon's Wood.

(The events here narrated occur simultaneously with those related in the last four chapters. *See Map 16.*)

DESPERATE and sanguinary as are the fights at Plancenoit, Fichermont, and Rossom Farm, a far more obstinate and bloody struggle takes place in Napoleon's Wood.

The 2nd Royal West Kent has now occupied the wood for three days. During this time the regiment and the 23rd Field Company have laboured every night at constructing stockades, trenches, and obstacles along the edge, until at last their defences are even more formidable than those made by the Dublin Fusiliers at Hutte Wood. In addition to the intrenchments on the boundary of the wood, a "second line of defence" has been provided about two hundred yards from the western edge by making a massive stockade of tree trunks and earth, somewhat similar to that shown in *Fig. 43*, page 341. The position of this stockade is shown on *Map 16*, just on the east side

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of the road running through the wood. A clearing forty yards wide has been made in front of it by cutting down a belt of trees, the biggest branches of which have been lopped off, pegged to the ground, and interlaced with barbed wire, thus forming an almost impassable obstacle, in which, however, two or three gaps have been left for the advance and retreat of the companies defending the front edge of the wood.

Besides these preparations for resisting an attack, strongly roofed-in splinter-proof trenches have been excavated to protect the garrison from the enemy's shrapnel bullets and the splinters of his high-explosive howitzer shells.

Five companies of the West Kent are defending the edge of the wood, two are holding the "second line," and the last—H Company—forms the "battalion reserve" among the trees on the eastern boundary of the wood.

The regiment has suffered from some pretty severe cannonading by the German field-guns during the last three days, but all that it has hitherto experienced is as nothing compared with the bombardment which it receives to-day, the 20th of July. At daybreak, the 12th Artillery Regiment near Witterzee, and the heavy howitzer battalion at Culots, open fire on the wood. This is steadily maintained during the whole of the cavalry action at Hougoumont; and when, at seven o'clock, the 13th and 14th Regiments join in, the bombardment is something terrific, no less than ninety field-guns, eighteen field howitzers (of the 12th Regiment), and twenty-four heavy howitzers being engaged in it.

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Trees are shattered and split by high-explosive shells, wide gaps are blown in the stockade along the western boundary, and shrapnel bullets fall over the whole wood, beating on the branches with a pattering sound like the noise of a heavy fall of rain.

The broad belt of wire entanglement and abatis around the edge of the wood seems to share with the stockade the honour of being the chief target of the enemy's howitzers. Their fire is so accurate that it is evident that the Germans have some artillery officers hidden in Newcourt Wood, watching where the shells drop, and directing the fire of their batteries by means of telephones or signals. Shells charged with high-explosives burst at regular intervals along the entanglement, destroying the posts to which the wires are attached, and clearing broad gaps in the line. The obstacle is by no means entirely destroyed, though, for it is astonishing what little damage a shell does to a wire. It does not blow it into small pieces, as one might think, but merely breaks it. What happens, then, is that the wire curls up into loops and knots on the ground, making it very awkward to get across, especially for a man who is running with a rifle in his hand, and keeping his eye on an enemy shooting at him from about thirty yards away.

Considering the nature of the fire to which they are exposed, the defenders incur very few losses, for they are well sheltered by the splinter-proof trenches, each containing twenty-five men, in the centre of the wood. On two occasions high-explosive shells unfortunately drop

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through the earthen roofs and kill all the occupants. These are, however, chance shots, for the enemy do not know the exact positions of the splinter-proof trenches.

Only a few officers and sentries remain at the edge of the wood, where, posted in lookout places specially made behind the stockade, and roofed over with logs and bags of earth, they watch vigilantly for the enemy's approach.

While the German artillery is occupied in creating havoc in Napoleon's Wood, the 13th Infantry Brigade is assembling in the valley of the Hain River near Mon Souhait, where they are concealed from the view of the British. The brigadier has been ordered to attack the wood with the greatest vigour, so he determines to throw both of his regiments against it.

His plan is as follows:—The XXVth is to advance from Mon Souhait in skirmishing order against the British. When it has thoroughly succeeded in attracting their attention, two battalions of the XXVIth are to fall suddenly on the wood from behind Newcourt Farm. In this way, the brigadier hopes to surprise his enemy, and capture his position before he has time to bring up reinforcements.

At nine o'clock, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the XXVIth arrive behind Newcourt Wood, where they halt and wait for the attack of the XXVth to develop before making their own. They have made their short march unperceived by the sentries of the West Kent, but have not succeeded in evading the vigilant eye of the sapper subaltern in the balloon at Maransart, and a message is

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presently signalled to Lieutenant-Colonel Grave, who commands the regiment, telling him that a large number of Germans are gathering in the wood to his west. The colonel immediately warns his officers, and the men in the splinter-proof trenches hold themselves in readiness to line the stockades rapidly on the alarm being given. Four howitzers of the 37th Battery near Maison Roi are turned on Newcourt Wood, with comparatively little effect, however, owing to the inability of the artillery officers to see what their fire is doing.

Meanwhile the skirmishers of the 1st and 2nd/XXVth are slowly closing on Napoleon's Wood from the north. Like their compatriots of the XXIXth, who are at this moment attacking Rossom Farm, as narrated in the last chapter, they are very much exposed to view as they cross the bare, open fields lying between Mon Souhait and the wood. But their losses are trifling in comparison with those of the XXIXth, owing to the fact that the bombardment of their artillery is so heavy that both the Royal West Kent and the two companies of Lincolns in the redoubt are prevented from using their rifles. At first, in fact, they are not fired on at all. Later, General French sends the 53rd Battery from Hutte Wood to Flamandes, where it comes into action just as the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the XXVth emerge from the sheltered valleys around Mon Souhait, and follow their skirmishers across the open.

An hour later—at 10 a.m., to be exact—the Germans are ready for the great assault. Their positions at this

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moment are shown on *Map 16.* One thousand men of the 1st and 2nd/XXVth are lying in an irregular line four hundred yards from the northern boundary of Napoleon's Wood; 1,000 more are half a mile behind them, in the hollow round Mon Souhait; 1,000 men of the 1st/XXVIth are lining the edge of Newcourt Wood, inside which are another 1,000 men of the 2nd/XXVIth; 2,000 men of the 3rd Battalions of the two regiments form a local reserve at Mon Souhait. Altogether, 4,000 men are ready to spring on the British, with another 2,000 a short distance behind, ready to back them up.

A furious rifle fire is opened on the line of stockades; a driving storm of bullets hurtles through the trees; the artillery bombardment increases in intensity until a violent hurricane of bursting, shrieking shells converts the wood into a pandemonium of noise.

Suddenly the German guns stop firing, the fusillade from the infantry dies away, and for one moment a death-like silence reigns over Napoleon's Wood. Then a Babel of cheering, intermingled with the ringing of bugles, rends the air; the long lines of the XXVth Regiment rise from the ground and move rapidly forward, and dark masses of running figures emerge from Newcourt Wood, and charge across the strip of open ground lying in front of the West Kent's stockade.

When the enemy's shells cease to explode in the wood, the British bugles sound the "alarm," the officers blow their whistles, and the men pour out of their splinter-proof trenches. Dashing through the trees, they man the

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stockade, and open a terrific rifle fire on the advancing Germans. But the latter are now only about a hundred and fifty yards off; and though whole ranks are swept away by the British bullets, sheer weight of numbers carries the remainder forward.

A fierce hand-to-hand fight takes place around the stockade. The Kentish men fight bravely, and for some time hold their own, although they are greatly outnumbered. Reinforcement after reinforcement comes out of Newcourt Wood and hurls itself on them. The Germans pour through the gaps made by the shells. Bayonet rings against bayonet, and rifles are discharged with their muzzles against men's bodies.

Gradually the defenders of the stockade are driven back. Firing, thrusting, and stabbing, they retire slowly through the trees. Many succeed in escaping behind the "second line of defence," but the majority are killed, wounded, or captured.

The Germans press forward, but their advance is checked at the clearing in front of the second stockade in the centre of the wood. As they struggle across the obstacles, which are but little damaged by the bombardment, a heavy fire from the two companies lining the massive wall of earth and timber sweeps them away by the hundred. A machine gun, pointed through an opening, rakes them with a torrent of bullets. If the issue of the fight rested on mere numbers, the Germans would overwhelm the two or three hundred Kentish men; but the formidable entanglement of branches and wire has to

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be crossed in the face of a deadly fire before they can reach them. It is this that baffles them, and eventually they retire behind the trees.

The brigadier now orders up the two battalions of the local reserves from Mon Souhait. The 3rd/XXVIth marches through Newcourt Wood, enters Napoleon's Wood, and joins the other two battalions of the regiment. Skirmishers, posted behind trees, keep up a constant fire on the defenders of the stockade. Here, however, the latter have the advantage, for they are aiming through loopholes, and are in consequence better protected. The Germans lose heavily; the dead body of a sharpshooter lies behind nearly every tree.

At midday a fierce assault is again made on the British. The 3rd/XXVth moves up from Mon Souhait (*along the dotted blue line shown on Map 16*), and attacks the redoubt behind Napoleon's Wood. When it is seen advancing, two companies of the South Lancashire Regiment march rapidly from Levant Farm to Maison Roi (*as shown on the map*), and check the Germans with a heavy fire, in which they are greatly assisted by the 63rd and 73rd Batteries at Bruyère.

Five hundred men of the 2nd/XXVIth endeavour to get round the southern end of Napoleon's Wood, to attack the stockade from the rear. When they cross the ridge which runs from the wood to Bruyère, they become the object of a heavy rifle fire from two companies of Scots Guards garrisoning the redoubt there. The cyclists' machine gun and two pom-poms open on

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them from behind the wood, and their attack is repelled with ease.

But it is inside the wood that the fiercest fight takes place. Here the Germans have collected the whole of the 1st and 2nd/XXVth and 1st and 3rd/XXVIth—or, rather, what remains of these battalions, for allowing for their losses during the first attack, they cannot have more than three thousand men engaged. A determined and obstinate assault is made on the stockade. The Germans advance to the attack with the greatest gallantry, but are mowed down in hundreds by a steady, accurate rifle fire while they are struggling through the entanglement of branches and wire towards their enemy.

At one place they almost carry the stockade—in fact, they do succeed in getting behind it for a brief period. The major of the 3rd/XXVIth places two of his companies, with a gap between them, along the edge of the clearing. These concentrate their fire on a piece of the stockade about fifty yards in length, and pour streams of bullets through the loopholes, appreciably subduing the fire of the defenders. Taking advantage of this, a third company dashes through the gap and crosses the entanglement. The fire of the first two companies has now, however, to stop, as it is masked by the men of the assaulting company. The British man their loopholes, from which they have been temporarily driven away, and again their rifles—magazines open—belch forth torrents of lead. The track of the attackers is strewn with the bodies of dead and wounded men. The fourth company of the battalion

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hurls itself on the rear of the first, and sheer weight of numbers carries the assaulters on to and over the stockade, overpowering the thin line of British manning the loopholes.

The reserve company of the West Kent dashes up from the eastern edge of the wood, and throws itself on the intruders with fixed bayonets. A desperate struggle rages for a few minutes, but a constant stream of men pours over the top of the stockade, and the day seems lost to the British.

Fortunately at this moment six hundred men of the South Lancashire, hastily summoned from Levant Farm, enter the wood, charge the Germans, clear them out of the defenders' lines, and save the situation.

A pause now occurs in the fight in the wood. Except for an occasional shot, firing ceases. Both sides are exhausted after the fierce struggle, and have lost heavily, the attackers especially. The ground outside the stockade is littered with the dead and wounded, and a broad road of dead bodies marks the path of the assaulting column which temporarily succeeded in penetrating the British lines. Protected by their stockade, the West Kent have suffered less than their opponents; but this is a mere matter of comparison, for since the attack started they have lost over seven hundred men, killed, wounded, and captured. Their ranks are so thinned that the South Lancashire—except the two companies which have been sent to Maison Roi—are ordered to remain in the wood.

The Germans retire to the western edge, and at

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1.30 p.m. their howitzers once more open fire. Again the wood echoes to the crash of high-explosive shells, which sail over the trees and burst behind the stockade. Warned by this bombardment that the enemy intends to renew his attack, General French dispatches two regiments —the King's Royal Rifles and the Gordon Highlanders— from his reserve brigade at Maransart to Levant Farm, to be at hand in case the garrison of the wood should require assistance when the critical moment arrives. This is very likely, as they are losing men every minute under the German shell fire.

The Germans also receive reinforcements. At 3.30 p.m. the commander of the 4th Army Corps is aware that the assaults of his three brigades on Plancenoit, Rossom Farm, and Napoleon's Wood have resulted in failure. The British have repulsed the attack of his army corps all along the line. In one instance only has he gained partial success—the capture of the external stockade at Napoleon's Wood. He therefore determines to make his supreme effort at that point, as there the wooded country gives him sheltered ground over which to advance. The bare fields lying in front of the remainder of the British position afford, as you have seen, no cover for attacking troops. His losses in those parts have been so heavy as to render further attacks there undesirable.

Consequently, while the German artillery concentrates a heavy fire on that part of Napoleon's Wood still occupied by the British, the whole of the 14th Brigade (six thousand men) moves up from Ophain and assembles behind New-

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court Wood, which, by the way, has been the centre of a steady bombardment by the howitzers of the British 37th Battery throughout the day.

At four o'clock the German artillery transfers its fire from Napoleon's Wood to the country immediately behind it, in order to prevent any reinforcements coming up from the rear to join the defenders of the wood. At the same moment the German battalions advance, and, gallantly led by their officers, throw themselves in solid masses against the British stockade.

This, as a matter of fact, has not been very seriously injured by the howitzer bombardment; for the Germans have purposely avoided firing at it on account of their wounded countrymen, several hundreds of whom are lying along the line of obstacles close to it. Any damage that is done is instantly repaired by the sappers, who carry up bags of earth and short pieces of timber and throw them in the few gaps caused by the shells. Consequently, the Royal West Kent and the South Lancashire have still a solid wall to defend.

For over two hours a deadly fight rages around the British stockade. The Germans advance in lines, masses, groups—every possible formation, in fact. They attack the front of the stockade, endeavour to get round its ends, sweep it at intervals with a terrific fire from rifles and machine guns. But everywhere the dogged resolution of the British repels them. The scenes of the morning are repeated, only with additional horrors; for the number of dead and wounded is now so great that the attacking

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columns, advancing one after another from the rear, have literally to walk on their bodies,

Gradually more troops are drawn into the battle, until, by six o'clock, both the King's Royal Rifles and the Gordons are fighting in line with the West Kent and South Lancashire. The Germans, on their side, have utilized every available man; the whole of the 13th and 14th Brigades are engaged.

On several occasions the attackers succeed in penetrating within the stockade at different places. When this happens, the Maxim guns, stationed among the trees behind the defenders' line, are rapidly hauled to the threatened spots, and deadly streams of lead are poured on the invaders, converting the trenches into a shambles, and checking the onslaught until fresh parties of British infantry arrive on the scene.

At last a time arrives when the sheer exhaustion of the actors in this grim and deadly scene in the war puts a stop to the fight. Demoralized by the appalling slaughter of their comrades, their nerves shattered by the terrible fire to which they have been exposed, most of their officers killed while leading the various assaults made against the stockade, the Germans retire sullenly to Newcourt Wood.

The British are in little better plight than their adversaries, the men of the Royal West Kent especially. They have borne the brunt of the battle since early morn; many drop at their posts as soon as the danger is past, both mind and body completely worn out.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE END OF THE BATTLE.

SUNSET on the 20th finds both armies in a terribly exhausted state. On the British side, there is not one regiment but has been engaged—not one battery but has fired its thousand rounds. Every battalion in the reserve brigade has been drawn into the fight. The tide of battle has ebbed and flowed, surged and rolled, along the whole British line. Mousty Village, on the left, Pallandi Wood, Jolimont Farm, Botte Redoubt—all have been attacked in turn; but though the fighting at these places has been severe, it cannot compare with the obstinate and prolonged struggles at Napoleon's Wood, Rossom Farm, Plancenoit Village, and Fichermont Chateau.

At every point the Germans have been repulsed with heavy losses; but at what terrible cost! The British have succeeded in their object—they are still holding their position; but they have lost altogether in the four days' fighting more than one-third of their number. The survivors, with nerves shattered by the last fifteen consecutive hours of bursting shells, ears deafened by the

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constant roar of artillery and the crash of rifles, nostrils tingling and eyes smarting with the fumes of gunpowder and cordite, legs and backs aching with continual standing and crouching, are so mentally and physically exhausted as to be unable to follow up their advantage and strike a blow at their baffled opponents.

On the contrary, not only are they unable to advance against their foe, but it is highly probable that if the Germans were now to throw some fresh troops against the British they would gain a signal victory.

But they have no fresh troops. All their regiments, too, have been gradually drawn into the fight, until at last not one remains in the general reserve—all have been used up.

And the losses—what of them?

From sunrise to sunset, rifle and Maxim, field-gun and pom-pom, howitzer and 4·7, have been pouring out tons of lead; and 35,000 men, strongly intrenched, have been resisting to the death the attack of three times their number.

Compare this battle with one of those fought in South Africa.

There, it was a case of a few thousand fast-moving mounted men on one side—the Boers—scattered over twenty or thirty miles of country, provided with an absurdly small force of artillery, and with nothing to prevent them from riding away if seriously threatened; on the other side—the British—several thousand foot soldiers attacking over ground where it was an exception *not* to be able to find some sort of cover.

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Here has been quite another sort of battle. The British side—corresponding to the Boer side in the South African war, because the latter was numerically inferior, and nearly always on the defensive in a big fight—consists chiefly of infantrymen, unable to move off when it pleases them, because by so doing they would give the enemy possession of Brussels; so they have been obliged to stand fast, and into a line, eleven miles long, reckoning from Mousty to Plancenoit, have crammed over 30,000 rifles, 168 guns and howitzers, and 41 Maxims. Against this line the German infantrymen have directed 75,000 rifles and over 500 guns and howitzers, afterwards advancing to the assault over gently undulating ground, practically devoid of hedgerows or any other form of cover.

No wonder, then, that both sides have lost heavily.

In the five days' fighting, from the first shot, fired by a 12th Lancer at Justice Tree crossroads, to the last, by a Gordon Highlander in Napoleon's Wood, the British have lost 12,000 killed and wounded out of their 35,000 fighting men, and the Germans 41,000 out of the 110,000 men in their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Army Corps and cavalry divisions.

The British, however, in spite of their valiant resistance, are in sore straits. This evening probably, to-morrow most certainly, the Germans will continue their enveloping movement—that is to say, they will prolong their intrenchments round by Napoleon's Wood, Hougoumont, and La Haie Sainte, to Lamarache. They will occupy these intrenchments with a few troops, collect the remainder

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of their force, and then make a fresh swoop along the rear of the British army between it and Brussels. In fact, their next move will result in General French's force being completely surrounded and cut off from the source whence it draws its food and ammunition.

The situation is serious. What is to be done?—stand fast and fight to the bitter end, or retreat?

Retreat! General French's face does not look like it, as, towards eight in the evening, accompanied by his staff and General Douglas, he rides slowly up the slopes of Bruyère Hill, and halts on the summit.

The noise of battle has died away, and there is a peaceful silence but for the distant cries of wounded men in agony, and the sound of wheels, as the ambulances move to and fro between the battlefield and the hospitals.

The two generals stand a little apart from the staff-officers who accompany them. They are gazing through their field-glasses to the north-west, where the mists of the oncoming night are beginning to rise over the landscape.

The mists thicken. General French shuts his glasses with a snap, and turns to his companion. As he does so, there is a faint "boom!" far, far away in the west. Then another, and then "boom—boom—boom!" followed by silence as the darkness gathers.

The German horse artillery guns are being used against some one ten miles or so away to the west. But whom?

To answer that, we must look at a telegraph form

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lying in General French's pocket. It is dated to-day at Ghent (*see Map 1*), and bears the following words:—

"*I expect to reach HAL at eight o'clock to-morrow morning with the 2nd and 3rd Army Corps. Hold on to your position at all costs.*

KITCHENER."

Hal! The 2nd and 3rd British Army Corps! Why, they will take the German 4th Army Corps in rear, and crack it like a nut against the British position!

But Prince Lebenfeld is not anxious to play the part of a nut to the British crackers. When the sun rises on the morning of the 21st of July, its rays flash on the German army in full retreat towards Namur. Shattered out of all recognition by its gallant but unavailing assaults on the British, it feels itself unable to withstand the attack of 70,000 fresh opponents.

The great four days' battle is over!

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APPENDIX.

LIST OF THE GERMAN ARMY WHICH FIGHTS THE BRITISH.

(*For strength of regiments, see note at the end.*)

- **2nd Army Corps.**
  - **3rd Division.**
    - **5th Brigade.**
      - IXth Infantry Regiment.
      - Xth Infantry Regiment.
    - **6th Brigade.**
      - XIth Infantry Regiment.
      - XIIth Infantry Regiment.
    - 5th and 6th Artillery Regiments.
    - 1st Lancers.
  - **4th Division.**
    - **7th Brigade.**
      - XIIIth Infantry Regiment.
      - XIVth Infantry Regiment.
    - **8th Brigade.**
      - XVth Infantry Regiment.
      - XVIth Infantry Regiment.
    - 7th and 8th Artillery Regiments.
    - 2nd Lancers.
- **3rd Army Corps.**
  - **5th Division.**
    - **9th Brigade.**
      - XVIIth Infantry Regiment.
      - XVIIIth Infantry Regiment.
    - **10th Brigade.**
      - XIXth Infantry Regiment.
      - XXth Infantry Regiment.
    - 9th and 10th Artillery Regiments.
    - 1st Dragoons.
  - **6th Division.**
    - **11th Brigade.**
      - XXIst Infantry Regiment.
      - XXIInd Infantry Regiment.
    - **12th Brigade.**
      - XXIIIrd Infantry Regiment.
      - XXIVth Infantry Regiment.
    - 11th and 12th Artillery Regiments.
    - 2nd Dragoons.

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XXVth Infantry Regiment. XXVIth Infantry Regiment.	13th Brigade.	7th Division.	4th Army Corps.
XXVIIth Infantry Regiment. XXVIIIth Infantry Regiment.	14th Brigade.		
	13th and 14th Artillery Regiments.		
	1st Hussars.		
XXIXth Infantry Regiment. XXXth Infantry Regiment.	15th Brigade.	8th Division.	
XXXIst Infantry Regiment. XXXIInd Infantry Regiment.	16th Brigade.		
	15th and 16th Artillery Regiments.		
	2nd Hussars.		

There are also two cavalry divisions—the 2nd and 3rd—each consisting of three brigades, each brigade of three regiments.

NOTE.

A German *Infantry Regiment* consists of three battalions, each of which is 1,000 strong.

A German *Cavalry Regiment* consists of four squadrons, each of which is 150 strong.

A German *Artillery Regiment* consists of six batteries, each of six guns. Of the 24 batteries with an Army Corps, 21 are armed with 77-millimetre guns, which means that the diameter of the shell is about three inches. The other three batteries have 4-inch light field howitzers (105-millimetres).

A German *Howitzer Battalion* consists of four batteries, each armed with six 15-centimetre howitzers, firing a shell nearly six inches in diameter.

The *total strength* of a German Army Corps is about 29,000 rifles, 1,200 sabres, and 144 guns. There are two companies of Field Pioneers, a Bridge Train, and a Bearer Company attached to each division, which are not shown in the preceding list.

THE END.

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